Van Zanten's Happy Days

Laurids Bruun

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VAN ZANTEN'S
HAPPY DAYS

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VAN ZANTEN'S HAPPY DAYS

A LOVE STORY FROM PELLI ISLAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH
OF LAURIDS BRUUN
BY DAVID PRITCHARD

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INTRODUCTION

VAN ZANTEN'S HAPPY DAYS: A Love Story from the Pelli Islands, is the English translation of the title of a book, written by the Dutchman, PIETER ADRIAAN VAN ZANTEN, who was born in Amsterdam on 3rd January 1846, and died in Paris on 15th November 1904, of inflammation of the lungs, at an *hôtel meublé*, situated in Rue de Pension behind Luxemburg Hospital, Rue Dame-des-Champs.

The MS. is written partly in Dutch and partly (from Chapter X. onwards) in English, and, according to a diary also extant, these two sections correspond to two different periods of time separated by at least ten years. Furthermore, it is probable that the last chapter was written to complete the story, at a time when the author meditated publishing the manuscript in book form—a plan which, for

some unknown reason, he subsequently abandoned.

The present story is the only one of the MSS. left us by Van Zanten, mentioned in his diary as intended for publication during the author's lifetime, and as the story appears to have been completed and given a title with that purpose in view, I have selected it as the most suitable for inaugurating the series.

In the following pages of the introduction I shall explain—utilizing information obtained both from Van Zanten personally and from the diary he left behind—who Van Zanten was; and how it occurred that I, a Danish author, come to introduce him into the realms of literature.

In so doing I wish it to be understood that I make no attempts at literary portrait-painting—that belongs elsewhere and may be published later—but merely content myself with introducing actual facts which may help to throw a light upon a strange and remarkable book, the author of which has fulfilled a strange and remarkable destiny.

. . . . . .

Van Zanten's father was a prosperous instrument merchant in Amsterdam, whose wife died

so long before that the son could but dimly recollect her.

The father spending most of the day in the shop, the boy's education was left chiefly to the housekeeper, a strict, reserved woman whom he disliked. He generally shifted for himself, spending most of his spare time roaming round about the harbour.

When Adriaan was twelve years old his father married his housekeeper. The boy took this much to heart, and, immediately after his confirmation, was sent, at his own request, to his father's cousin, who owned a large factory at Batavia, there to receive a business education.

Nothing is written in the diary about his years of apprenticeship at Batavia; I remember, however, Van Zanten once telling me in Paris that he was left almost entirely to the mercy of his fellow-clerks, from whom he learnt first and foremost to play cards and drink whisky; and that soon afterwards he had a violent attack of malaria, during which he was nursed at his half-uncle's house; and that this experience caused him to avoid whisky for many years afterwards. Furthermore, he once confided in me that he experienced his first serious disappointment during these early years, through being jilted

by a very pretty and very experienced cousin (probably his chief's daughter), with whom he had fallen hopelessly in love. This affair is obviously at the root of his bitter antagonism to European "ladies," which is constantly in evidence in his works, and which I remember so well in our conversations. One of his favourite theories was that the so-called savage woman was, both physically and morally, far superior to the civilized European woman, or at any rate to her representatives in colonial "society."

Already, when quite young, Van Zanten showed an extraordinary capacity for understanding and being understood by the natives. He would never admit that they were inferior to himself, and, in spite of many disappointments from the city-bred demoralized specimens with whom he came mostly in contact, treated them always as his equals.

For the purpose of utilizing this valuable characteristic, which, moreover, tended to undermine discipline in the town and at the head office, he was sent (while yet in his teens) as independent buyer to the South Sea Islands. The firm's chief business was in coffee and spices, and supplies were preferably obtained from those small islands

where the European had not yet taught the natives the value of their products, and so "contaminated" the market.

Van Zanten, possessing as he did his share of the inbred boldness of the Dutchman, became in these years more intimate with the tropical island nature than probably any European before him. He acquired an exact knowledge of the Micronesian and Polynesian life and thought. He has repeated to me times out of number that the years he spent as the sole white man among the natives, especially among the Micronesians and in the Caroline and Ladrone Islands, were the happiest of his life. Significant in this connection is the title of the present book.

From the diary, which is frequently very terse and incomplete, it is not clear which islands he visited or how long he remained on each. The gaps in the diary are possibly due to the absence of writing materials in the primitive conditions which he adopted when living alone among the natives.

Crowding the pages are the names of innumerable small islands, to which from time to time he made expeditions from his permanent base on one of the well-known larger islands. It has

been found impossible to identify these islands owing to the names being apparently written phonetically from the native pronunciation.

In the diary he constantly assumes that the locality is known; the dating also is in the highest degree incomplete, and frequently unintelligible to one not acquainted with the language. Where he had no calendar to hand he contented himself with reckoning, after the native fashion, from the monsoon and moon changes. He occasionally gives, with great care, an unbroken succession of dates—for instance: Monday, the 3rd; Tuesday, the 4th; and so on; but both the name of the month and the number of the year are left to the imagination.

He lived on Yap Island in the Caroline group for five years as depôt chief, and concludes one section of the diary with the entry under January 1872, that he has received commands to return to Batavia; but that as he does not wish to do so, he has decided to send in his resignation and receive the pension due to him after ten years' service. He intends to accompany Tongu to the latter's native island, which, he writes, is said to be an absolute Paradise. That he carried out this plan is evident from the present book, which deals with Tongu's island, named by the natives them-

selves Pelli Island, and incontestably one of the Pelew group, situated south-east of the Philippines, between the sixth and eighth parallels of latitude.

On this island, if one may judge from the narrative, he spent more than two years—a happy time, which ended with the catastrophe related in the last chapter, after which he departed. With Tongu's and Toko's help he succeeded in reaching Yap Island, whence he took the first boat home to Batavia. The diary here relates that he once more entered the firm's service.

In the ensuing two years, spent quietly in Batavia, he must have written the first, or Dutch, portion of the story. He calls this his "æsthetic period," during which he settled down to club life, studied literature, and dabbled in writing with the intention of becoming an author. For unknown reasons he abandoned this intention, and, according to the diary, once more went abroad as the agent of the firm. He acted as Department chief and buyer both on the Marshall and Solomon Islands, but in 1880 was once more in Java.

Then in 1882 he received a letter from his father asking him to return to Holland. Old Van Zanten had had an attack of apoplexy, and, feel-

ing his end draw nigh, wished to see his son once again.

Van Zanten wound up his affairs and sailed for Europe, but before he arrived his father had died. After sharing with the widow—whom he does not appear to have met personally, the diary mentioning only letters—there remained, when the estate was realized, sufficient capital to enable him to spend the rest of his life as a private gentleman.

Having no heirs, he bought an annuity and settled in London, where, until 1892, he lived a solitary and regular club life. During this period the English section of the book was written, and it was then that he again entertained serious thoughts of embarking on authorship. What fresh consideration or experience caused him to abandon the plan, the diary does not relate. But soon afterwards he is found in Paris, and now begins a period of restless travelling, which, with the exception of an occasional quiescent year spent in Paris, London, or Naples, lasted until his death.

The first time I met Van Zanten was at a boarding-house at Berne in the winter of 1895. For three weeks we lived in adjacent rooms and took our meals in common. My first impression of him was not favourable. He was tall and fat, with thick, light red hair and beard, rather lazy

movements, and a pair of large blue eyes which—to use one of his own words—had a peculiar "blank" expression.

He appeared unemotional and blasé. It amused him to offend others by expressing his contempt for European civilization and for European women. When one day he discovered by chance that I was an author, he at once became interested, and, without at this time hinting that he also wrote, threw off his reserve and told me long and interesting accounts of his life among the South Sea Islands.

Despite his half-hundred years, he could, when the spirit moved him, relate in a most youthful manner, provided his audience listened quietly without interrupting him with questions. Wittily, boldly, and at the same time feelingly, he talked of his "happy years," as he called them. So vivid and realistic was his recollection that he was often compelled to call a pause to fight down his emotion.

So new and extravagant was much of it to me that, in spite of my intense interest, I privately condemned half of it as travellers' lies. But when I came to know him better, I realized that I had wronged him. Veracity and contempt for all exaggeration were in reality fundamental

principles in his nature. Later on, in Paris, I learnt to know him as one of the most upright, and in the depths of his nature most noble-hearted, men I have ever met, whether at home or abroad. In spite of the difference in our ages we became fast friends. When I departed from Berne he asked for my address, but made no use of it.

I did not meet him again until, one January evening in 1899, I saw him sitting outside the Café d'Harcourt in the Boulevard St. Michel in the "Quartier Latin," where he was enjoying the ragging of the students.

We stared for some time at one another; then he lifted his glass and nodded to me, and I hastened over to his table.

After that we met each evening at Harcourt's. Like all lonely people it was difficult for him to stop talking once he had begun to let himself go. Many and many an hour have we walked along the boulevard discussing the South Sea Islands, to which subject he inevitably returned. Europe made him feel uncomfortable, he said. I believe that what prevented him ever actually yielding to his violent home-sickness for the islands was the fear of disillusionment on seeing the results of European "culture," which, since his happy days, had made such enormous progress,

especially after the Germans took a hand in the work.

One evening when I visited him at his lonely and sombre hotel rooms in Rue Jacob we chanced to be discussing literature, and I exhorted him earnestly to write an account of his experiences. Then it was that he confessed his previous literary skirmishes, mentioning his æsthetic period at Batavia, when he "did both verse and prose," and half shamefacedly, half proudly, told about his diary and the manuscripts which he still had by him.

I asked him if I might read some of them. "Yes, when I am dead!" he replied, and changed the subject abruptly.

Some evenings later, for the first time, he mentioned Ali, the central character in the present story. He spoke hesitatingly and in a subdued manner, as if discussing a subject he would rather in reality have left untouched. Before I departed that night I endeavoured once more to persuade him to show me some of his MSS.

"Ha! that would be something for an author!" said he teasingly, and began laughing heartily.

"You shall have the whole lot when I am dead!" were his last words on this subject—a

remark which I regarded as a joke. A few days later I returned home.

This time we exchanged a few letters, but his became more and more brief, the last one I received being from Naples. My reply to the latter remained unanswered.

In the autumn of 1903, when I was again in Paris, I sought Van Zanten, both at our café rendezvous and at his hotel. But in vain; they did not even know his address. Upon my inquiring at the Dutch Consulate, however, I was informed that his furniture had been left in some hired rooms in Paris, while he himself was abroad, probably in the Colonies.

I remembered his home-sickness, and abandoned all hope of ever seeing him again. To cover all eventualities, however, I left a letter at the Consulate (which they promised to forward upon ascertaining his whereabouts) in which I informed him of my vain search and of my longing to hear from him again.

Whether this letter ever reached him, I know not; in any case, it was never answered, and the recollection of our friendship gradually faded into the background.

Finally, in February last year, during my stay at Nice, I received a letter bearing the Dutch Con-

sulate crest and stamped with many postmarks.

The letter, which had followed me from place to place, contained the announcement of Van Zanten's death, together with a copy of his will, in which he willed and bequeathed to "Mijnheer Laurids Bruun van Denemarken" a collection of MSS. and diaries, "and he shall be the sole judge of how much of the bequest is worthy of public perusal, as also the time and place of its publication."

In presenting to the world Van Zanten's first book, I not only discharge a cherished personal duty, but in addition believe that I am enriching literature with an interesting and remarkable work, which opens up a new and prolific source of poetical inspiration.

It is a melancholy thought, how slight an incident can change a man's whole career. If Van Zanten had followed his original plan and published his book, it would in all probability have appeared in the middle of the seventies, during his æsthetic Batavian period—in other words, before Kipling, who was born in 1865, had begun to think of capturing the Indian mainland for literature. Now Kipling is world-famous, and justly so—but Van Zanten, whose book with regard to

freshness of subject, originality of treatment, and intuitive power, so much reminds one of Kipling, died in obscurity, unknown to the world.

I shall publish Van Zanten's remaining MSS. periodically in the intervals of my own writings, provided they prove suitable for production.

With regard to publication abroad, an effort will be made to bring out the present book in an English and a Dutch edition; the remaining MSS. will probably also receive similar treatment.

In conclusion I should like to add that in translation I have followed the original very closely, and that I have omitted deliberately to correct grammatical and literal faults common to the beginner but here and there I have been compelled to tone down, and sometimes wholly delete words and expressions, the extreme "naturalness" of which, when taking into consideration Danish ideas, make a direct translation difficult. I presume that Van Zanten, if he had published the book, would himself have made similar excisions of expressions which exceed the bounds of good taste.

Some readers will perhaps consider that even now in this connection I have not been sufficiently strict.

LAURIDS BRUUN

COPENHAGEN, *May* 1908.

CHAPTER ONE

MY host and I were fishing over by the reef, when we heard some one shouting to us from the mainland, where stood a shivering old man jumping up and down in the coral ground, as if he were treading on hot bricks. I had not the faintest idea who he was, but the moment Tongu set eyes on him he flung down his fishing poles and sprang like lightning to the oars. "Wahuja!" he ejaculated, jerking his head excitedly as a sign that I should hurry, whereupon I hastily pulled in the net, which had slipped off its long bamboo pole.

"It's 'Long White-Ears,' " said Tongu,[1] poking me impatiently in the back with the handle of the oar. Then I knew. "Long White-Ears" was the King's chief man—Prime Minister, Chamber-

[1] Tongu is an old acquaintance. I met him first on Yap Island and helped him return to his native island. From him I learnt the language.

lain, all in one. It is the name the boys shout after him when he leaves the shelter of the King's House. His ears were quite five inches long, and covered with hair as white as the close-cropped curls of his head.

We quickly pulled the boat round, signalling to Wahuja, who had ceased hopping, and now stood looking towards us, his hands resting on his shivering knees.

"It's the Tax!" I thought, my conscience telling me that though I had lived with Tongu on the island since the previous monsoon, I had paid nothing in return to the royal exchequer, whether of fish, fowl, or fruit.

As long as I caught fish for Tongu and boarded with him, he paid taxes for us both. But of course in the long run such an arrangement could not hold good for such an extraordinary man as myself.

"What does he want with us?" I demanded.

"The King!"

He said nothing more, but rowed with all his might.

As we approached the land old Wahuja began hopping again. I made my greetings humbly, in the native style, and he received them graciously. His hands were shaking with cold, and his cheeks

sucked incessantly at his toothless gums. His small, piercing eyes searched me from head to foot, while he delivered his official speech.

"The King's eyes are large," he said, nodding thoughtfully with his emaciated head, "very large!" Which, translated into European, meant, "The King is very much astonished!"

I thought as much!

I carefully refrained from interrupting him; I tried to fling into my blue eyes and open face all the innocence and astonishment I could muster. My blameless expression merely irritated him, and he continued ominously: "The King's heart is withered!"

Tongu slapped his thighs humbly, looking reproachfully at the old man.

The King's heart being withered meant that he was displeased.

I still refrained from speech.

"The King desires that the Rich Giver shall come immediately and cure his eyes."

"The Rich Giver" was a confounded nickname given me soon after my arrival, because of my guns and my well-filled sea-chest. The name has stuck, and I know only too well what it means when it is used.

"Very well!" I answered.

It was already past ten o'clock, and the morning sun shone mercilessly down on the hard, bumpy, coral rock on which we were standing.

I led the way up to Tongu's house.

Tongu solemnly stooped down and let Wahuja climb on his back. The tender-footed old skeleton was thus carried in comfort over the coral strand, and deposited safely on the soft, fine sand farther inland.

When we reached the house, the old man refused to enter, Tongu being so much his inferior. We left him sitting under a cocoa-nut palm, where he stretched out his legs and leaned back at his ease against the stem. I went inside to fetch a gift for the visitor.

"I am a weak old man!" whined the minister, wiping his mouth suggestively with the back of his hand.

"Stay here for a while!" invited Tongu ingratiatingly.

"I am a weak old man!" quavered the old fellow again, painfully extending his swollen blue-black toes.

At last I understood. I fetched my Java rum, the fame of which had evidently reached the Court, and poured him out a drink.

The old man emptied the glass eagerly, but, be-

fore swallowing, let the spirit run round his mouth several times and gargled his throat. Then he licked the glass carefully both inside and out, at the same time squinting towards the bottle, which I thrust hastily in my pocket.

Tongu and I were ransacking the sea-chest, looking for a suitable present, when the light from the low doorway became suddenly obscured. The old man's pride was not proof against his greed!

"I am a poor man," he whined, stretching out his hand. At that moment he saw one of the big, speckled bugs in a crevice in the bamboo wall. In a flash he grabbed it between his forefinger and thumb, put it deliberately in his mouth and swallowed it. Wahuja was the richest man on the island. Rumour had it that he had amassed a large *Tabu*[1] through extorting bribes from those anxious to keep in the good graces of the King.

I found a pocket pencil with a silver top which I gave him. He bit it, smelt it, and finally stuck it in his hair with a deep sigh. Apparently he was not satisfied, but his face annoyed me so much that I took no notice.

I decided on a red silk scarf from my Batavian period for the Queen; and for the King, an old

[1] See note, p. 135.

pair of opera-glasses, given me by my chief's wife for Christmas at home in Java.

Along the road—which stretches from the shore to the King's House, and is paved with large flat stones—we tramped off together. I saw Talao's boys, who at that time were not quite old enough for the Common House,[1] hiding behind a bamboo fence.

"Long White Ears!" shouted one, ducking down out of sight. The old man pretended not to hear; but Tongu threw a stone in their direction, hitting the fence with a resounding blow which raised the white dust. The boys jeered mockingly from a safe distance.

When we came to the place where the road curves towards the King's House, we saw a row of inquisitive female heads peering out from the room behind the verandah. They disappeared as soon as they found themselves discovered.

We crawled up an inclined plank, and, headed by Wahuja, crept through the narrow space between the floor and the low-hanging roof of palm leaves.

In the centre of the room, seated on a decorated pisang mat, was the King. There were only

[1] See pp. 88ff.

three walls to the room—two side walls, each pierced by a window, and, facing the verandah, a thin bamboo partition in which was a wide door-opening.

Behind the King, a little to the left, sat the Queen, on a separate mat.

Wahuja bumped down on his stiff knees before the King, and whispered something we could not hear. He then beckoned me forward. I advanced, leaving Tongu standing alone at the entrance. Wahuja tiptoed to his mat, situated on the Queen's right. The King's Court, or body-guard, was seated before the bamboo partition, with their spears and clubs resting against the wall. The ladies of the Court—the King's other wives—(together with the children) were clustered inquisitively behind the door-opening muttering to one another in subdued tones. The King was a fat, middle-aged fellow with a stomach so shining and distended that it overlapped his tapa.[1] The hair of his head was brushed straight up and held in position by a comb, apparently of tortoise-shell. Around his arms were rows of dazzling-white human knuckle bones. He rose to his feet with difficulty and shook hands in the European manner.

[1] Loincloth.

"Shanku, Sar!" [1] said he, showing his white teeth in a smile.

This was the only English he knew; he was very proud of it, and used it on all official occasions. I greeted him in the native fashion, and, crouching on all-fours, wished him a long life and many sons.

This pleased him; he gave me a playful shove, making signs that I was to sit at his side. I was, then, in favour after all; it was all rubbish about the King's heart withering. Wahuja had exaggerated in order to frighten me, and so earn a drink.

The King had large eyes, greedy and melancholy; they devoured me inch by inch, just as Wahuja's had done.

The Queen was more aristocratic than her consort. She had red flowers in her hair, and in both ears, and round her neck two rows of pearls, at which she constantly glanced down; she had, also, pearls round her wrists. She was tatooed black and green in two parallel zigzag lines, beginning at her neck and continuing downwards over her breasts, which were scarcely larger than the King's. On each breast, with the nipple as a centre, a flaming sun had been tattooed.

[1] Thank you, sir.

She sat motionless, her open palms resting on the mat, and stared fixedly at me from under her indolent eyelids. But when my eyes met hers she turned her head aside, and made a noise like a cat being stroked the wrong way.

The greatest ceremony was observed. With his own hands the King chose from his arm-basket [1] the finest betel-nut, himself cracked the white shell, cut the kernel in two with his ax of state, [2] sprinkled powdered lime on it from a perforated pumpkin, found an extra juicy pepper leaf to wrap round it, and then handed me the tasty morsel.

It was an absolutely first-class quid of betel. I had never in my life tasted a better, not even on Yap Island, where they are renowned for their betel. The King then made a quid for himself, and we sat chewing for a while in solemn silence, at intervals spitting the red juice far out across the bamboo floor. We chatted about the weather, and the fishing prospects in connection with the

[1] All the natives carry a basket which hangs on the arm, and serves the purpose of a pocket. In it are placed betel nuts or anything else one puts in a pocket.

[2] The King carries over his left shoulder as a mark of his dignity a small white ax with a handle made of wood, and head formed of the closed double shell of a giant mussel. All the natives carry such an ax, but the King's is smaller and of better workmanship.

change of monsoons. The King made a delicate allusion to the fact of his being aware that Tongu had the best fishing rights in the district. They so seldom had fish to eat at Court; the taxes were paid for the most part in fruit and game, with an occasional suckling-pig.

I promised to send him a whole basketful of fish, and assured him that I had not paid my taxes before, because of my desire to find something out of the ordinary—something that would both make the King's eyes big and enlarge his heart.

This speech delighted him. He showed his teeth,[1] and as I noticed his melancholy eyes fixed upon the bulge in my coat made by my flask and opera-glasses, I seized the opportunity to present my gifts. When the Court saw the flask, a chorus of grunts and rustlings and mutterings broke out along the whole wall. The women and children also expressed their joy on the King's behalf.

He immediately took a long drink, and then, out of politeness, offered me the flask, but snatched it back again before I had time to refuse.

The opera-glasses did not interest him very much—they were only for the eyes. The Queen smacked her fat thighs together in delight when

[1] The native expression for a smile.

she received the silk scarf. She, however, recovered her dignity immediately.

She tried it first round her neck, then over her breasts, afterwards as a skirt, and finally round her arms. Each time she looked round towards the women in the background, who applauded so vociferously that the King was constrained to turn and shout: "Shut up!"

Among them was a pretty girl of twelve, not quite old enough for the Common House, who sat in the doorway staring with big shining eyes, captivated by my grandeur. I could not resist nodding to her in the European manner, at which she nodded back, smiling over the whole of her sweet innocent face.

Then came an elderly woman—presumably her mother—who took her by the scruff of the neck, threw her to one side, and sat down in her place, nodding and smiling vigorously at me. It was a poor exchange!

The King stood up. The rum was beginning to take effect. He kicked me hard on the shin, a mark of honour among the natives, and invited me to dinner.

Everybody now disappeared except the Crown Prince—a supple seventeen-year-old youth with

a straight back and shifty eyes—and Wahuja, who continued following close behind, listening attentively with his long ears.

The King showed me the verandah and his unique cocoa-nut palms. Some of them were higher than a four-storied house. At a sign from his father the Crown Prince swarmed up one of them and knocked down a couple of fresh nuts. In a trice he was down again, and had cut a triangular hole in one of them, after which the King and I drank from the same nut, a very great honour.

Then we returned to the room, where we inspected the treasures. One was a rusty ship's cannon, which the King allowed me to attempt to lift. Another was an enema syringe, which was suspended on the wall by a piece of bass. The King showed me how well it squirted, and washed down one of the wall-bugs with it. In the middle of the wall was hung a picture of the Madonna, a coloured print torn from a monthly magazine. He informed me that it was "Sha Quivin" (the Queen), the great Queen of the whites—with her little son!

. . . . . .

The dinner was excellent.

We had bread-fruit boiled together with yams,[1]

[1] A root tasting like potatoes.

palm-cabbage of young cocoa-nut buds, which though rather coarse was otherwise very fresh and tasty. We had pigeons, roasted whole, entrails and all, and flying-fish backs garnished with pisang sap kneaded into balls. Flying-fish resembles, but is superior to, mackerel in taste. We drank freely of toddy,[1] and the King took an occasional pull at the rum flask.

Everything was served tastefully and cleanly on young pisang leaves. Eating with the fingers is more agreeable than with knife and fork, once one has acquired the habit.

For dessert we had taffa—a thick pudding of squashed bananas and cocoa-nut sap. While we were eating, both the King and I had behind us a young girl with a leaf fan which never ceased moving. Even when His Majesty went outside between two of the courses the girl followed him with the fan.

We enjoyed the food immensely. At the end the King was so pleased that he stretched himself full length on the mat, and told me to choose whatever I liked as a return gift.

[1] Toddy is a sweet palm wine procured by cutting up young cocoa-nut stems. The sap ferments after a time, forming the wine.

I thought immediately of the girl, but dared not ask for her; perhaps she was one of his favourite children. Whilst I sat thinking, the Court returned, having eaten the remains of the feast, which is allotted them. Among them was a young, broad-shouldered fellow whose face I had noticed before on account of his warm, faithful eyes, resembling those of a dog.

I asked the King to give him to me. He raised himself on his elbow and looked round, then he beckoned the man forward. The fellow leaped into the air with joy and flung himself face downwards before me. They probably believed that I had rum in unlimited quantities at home in the chest. All the others looked sulkily and jealously at him.

Then the King evidently wished to sleep. Wahuja stole to my side and hinted that I had better take my leave. He whispered something to the King, who again got up hurriedly. While I thanked him and made my adieux in the native manner, he managed to recover a little of his royal dignity, and hiccoughed in a half-threatening voice something about my not forgetting the tax.

I went out, and found Tongu nibbling one of the King's cocoa-nuts. He was hungry and sulky,

and kept pushing against my new retainer, who followed meekly at my heels.

He told me his name was Tokosikasa. But, this being too much of a mouthful, I promptly reduced it to Toko.

CHAPTER TWO

TONGU had often mentioned "Our Fathers' Stone" in the woods to the west of the island. We decided to go there at sunrise the next day. Toko said that close by there was a clump of bread-fruit trees which swarmed with vampire bats; I decided to shoot some of them on the same occasion.

In the evening Toko prepared his bow, and I cleaned my gun. Tongu got the canoe ready and stocked it with cocoa-nuts, bananas, and yams, so that we were prepared for all eventualities.

Toko woke first and sprang to his feet with a howl. He needs lots of air. If he does not get it, he becomes as slack and heavy as a thunderstorm.

The eastern sky was like a monster mother-of-pearl shell streaked with silver. After a time the streaks became crimson, and finally, right down near the horizon, gold. Then suddenly the edge of the sun blazed out of the water, colouring the whole mirror red, and the mother-of-pearl

shrivelled up into pink fluff. When the molten ball was half-way up, the fluff vanished in the deep blue of the sea. For more than twenty years I have watched the sun rise among the islands, but I never tire of it. I never shall tire of it.

The wind blew a trifle cold from the northeast. It was the beginning of April, just before the calm which precedes the monsoon. But as soon as the sun was right up, the breeze dropped.

When we had worked the sleep from our joints, Toko could no longer contain himself. He started off at a run round the courtyard, so that Tongu's chickens flew flapping in all directions. Upon reaching the fence he steadied himself, grabbed two of the poles, and with a shriek of triumph executed a back somersault right over the top, landing triumphantly on his feet in the white sand.

Tongu rushed out angrily through the gate, where Toko stood grinning at him, his hands resting on his knees. It was the second time he had dared to insult Tongu's fence. The latter stooped down suddenly and scooped up a double handful of sand, intending to fling it in Toko's eyes, but when he looked up again the transgressor was already running full tilt towards the sea.

"Why take any notice of such a silly boy?" I said, repressing my laughter. And after calling down all the curses he knew upon Toko's yet unborn children, Tongu recovered his temper and began to whistle.

Toko was already in the canoe, which he paddled so far in towards the coral reef that the floating-keel [1] stuck. He began to jump up and down impatiently, watching us the while, and, to work off his superfluous energy, waved both oars violently round his head.

Tongu and I waded out to help him. Although Toko annoyed the dignified and bearded [2] Tongu, the latter was, nevertheless, very much attached to the mischievous young rascal, with his downy chin and smiling face. There is confoundedly little room in a canoe; I sat forward, with my knees jammed against my chin and my gun in my arms. Behind me crouched Tongu and Toko, each wielding a paddle, in the same cramped position.

In this manner we slid out over the smooth la-

[1] The canoe, being narrow and therefore easily capsized, is fitted with an auxiliary beam which floats parallel to the canoe, rendering it more stable.

[2] A beard is a mark of importance on the island, and the word is used with this meaning even when the person referred to has no beard, *e.g.* in the case of a woman.

goon, whose dead-white coral bottom several fathoms down showed palely through its light blue waters.

Toko had too much energy for mere paddling. He shouted and jodelled till his throat vibrated, throwing his head up and back like a singing bird. The sounds had no definite meaning, he said; he simply sits in the morning sun and lets himself go. That is all.

After a short time I began shouting, too, an old European fragment of song which I thought I had forgotten. Tongu joined in also. Our pace quickened; we flew along at a terrific speed, the floating-keel smothered in foam.

Out on the reef the breakers roared. At intervals they swept right over the red, shining mass of coral. It reminded me of a huge bleeding wound rinsed with soapy water.

Sea birds flapped shrieking over the wound, and sandpipers skimmed low over the surface of the lagoon. It was a glorious morning; the sky blazed like the dazzling facet of an enormous, dark blue diamond. We went about half-way across; the shore gleamed white with its fine coral sand, so that the eyes ached to look at it, although the sun was yet low in the heavens. Beyond the sand, just on the other side of the road leading from the

shore, the slim green pisang-banana palms with their enormous leaves fluttered in an atmosphere which was so transparent that I could distinguish the purple spots on their stems and leaves. The clusters of fruit themselves were as yet quite small and green.

The cocoa-nut palms heaved their golden crowns high over the pisang grove. The sensitive leaf-edges vibrated in the blazing air, although there was practically no wind. Close in against the trunk (like a little yellow cloud among the leaves) shone the squat sheaves, with a score of fibre-covered nuts in each. It was the King's cocoa-nut grove, from which all the boys of the village stole as a matter of course.

Beyond the palms again a few aged bread-fruit trees stretched their horizontal branches covered with enormous dark green foliage. The bullet-shaped fruit-flowers, each as big as a child's head, were green and ripe for plucking.

Now we were opposite the last hut in our village, which was the King's village and the largest on the island. The other villages each had their own king, but our King did not recognize them, and affirmed that he was the sole ruler and owner of the island.

Behind, and parallel with the stretch of sand,

ran a thick, dark coppice, consisting of wild pisang trees. They were smaller than the cultivated ones, and stood between mighty pandang bushes, the long, narrow leaves of which fit closely into one another.

The coast turned suddenly towards the north-west. Still we maintained our speed, and soon caught sight of the yellow pandang-leaf roofs of the neighbouring village, a prosperous little village, of some twenty huts, strongly roofed and well founded upon beams. The stockades were high and solid, almost buried in luxuriant yam-tree leaves.

The village was barely awake, sluggishly starting the day's work. Behind the huts, in a dark patch of low taro bushes, children were already playing hide-and-seek. As soon as they caught sight of us they rushed down to the edge of the water to stare at us.

Before one of the huts a man stretched sleep from his limbs. By his side was his wife, with a baby crawling in her lap.

Several young girls were playing about in the water. They shrieked like happy parroquets, splashing water in each other's eyes while they took their morning bath.

They kept ducking under the water after some-

thing which they swallowed greedily, and tried to snatch from one another. Either they were sea slugs or a little pink mussel called *muamua* by the natives and prized by them above all other shellfish.

They shaded their eyes with their hands and stared out towards us. Some of them obviously made fun of us. Toko shrieked at the top of his voice that we would be there in a minute.

On the right we saw the village canoe-house, much smaller than ours, in reality no more than a bamboo shed covered with loose cocoa-nut leaves, decorated by a single painted sun. We had a sun, a sitting woman, fish, birds, and a cocoa-nut palm. Also our roof was much loftier and better thatched.

Two men were excavating the trunk of a bread-fruit tree with their little hatchets. When they caught sight of us, they waved their hatchets and shouted. We shouted again, while the women, their legs straddled in the white sand, stared at us in silence.

Toko made the most disgraceful remarks to them, such as he would not have dreamed of saying to the women of his own village. It was impossible for them to hear him, but nevertheless

Tongu, who was as chivalrous as he was bearded, scolded him roundly.

We passed them. . . .

There—apart from the others—one hut more, in a cluster of pisang trees. A man was busy with the mature saplings. He felled one after the other with his white ax, which gleamed in the sunlight as he swung it. Children ran between his legs; but when the trees were about to fall, he pushed them away.

The pisang tree sighed in its fall like a living thing. The man's wife plucked bananas from the fallen tree, throwing the over-ripe ones to the children, who scrambled for them like small, eager dogs. Then she split the stem and carefully extracted the pith. All were too busy to notice us.

Again, we came to a dense coppice, where small green parrots shrieked.

What was that—another human being? Oh. a young girl! She was completely nude, and had apparently just come out of the water, looking for grass for a new skirt. Every time she caught sight of a flower she picked it and put it in her hair, her slim, light brown arm glowing in the sun. Her body was beautiful, with firm, rounded hips.

After watching her for a while I became irritated. It was too much; after all, I was still young! Even Toko, used to that sort of thing, craned his neck and stared with all his might.

CHAPTER THREE

THE copse came to an end. The ground was swampy, the reeds twice the height of a man; almost a jungle.

"We go up here!" Tongu explained.

Through the reeds a narrow stream cut its way, thousands of long vertical roots surmounted by dark crowns arching overhead.

The water was smooth and clear and very dark. An awe-inspiring feeling of loneliness enveloped us.

It was impossible to land; the banks under the mangrove trees were one continuous mud-hole. Still, a little farther, paddling swiftly, I saw the mangroves divide on the left, revealing a stream, barely twenty feet broad. The trees met above our heads; only a shaft of light filtered along the river, with a patch of blue sky here and there.

Trees hundreds of years old, but with tops still living, green and fertile, shut out light and air, their rigid branches, half decayed, covered with thick, green moss. The moss was starred

with green-leaved, red-flowering plants, creepers climbed up and down, weaving themselves together into an impenetrable net, shutting out even sound.

Hanging from the mighty, half-dead branches, straight down into the mud, the auxiliary roots sustained life in the parent stem by supporting it and by sucking up sustenance. Creepers hung everywhere between the stems, looking exactly like artificial rope-ladders leading to the tops of the trees.

It was cool and dark here—the transparent, deep green darkness of a crystal. It was still and quiet; the cries of the birds and the splash of the paddles gave back no echo. It was as if closely drawn blinds hung down from the roof of the forest. Bird-calls filled the air, but beyond an occasional flash of green or red I could see nothing of the singers.

Again and again I cocked my gun, but in vain. Each time my eye lost the target. Pigeons cooed incessantly—grey fruit-pigeons with red bumps over their beaks—but it was impossible to distinguish them as long as they remained motionless. Even Toko's eyes were not sharp enough.

At last we surprised a pair which were sitting

on one of the aerial roots nearest the water, drinking. They flew up startled, flapping toward the other side of the river.

I hit one of them. We had to row right in among the roots, where Toko secured it with his oar. I shot another pair farther on. They are about the size of a young chicken, and make excellent eating. In addition, I potted several green parrots which, yielding to curiosity, had remained on the outermost branches.

We saw dark-red honey-birds, flashing like lightning among the branches, but each time I failed to get my gun up in time. Even if I had succeeded in bringing one down, I doubt if it could have been found. They kept too much towards the centre of the trees, and the body would have probably fallen in an inaccessible place, or have remained hanging in the net of creepers. The honey-bird, a small and agile bird, lives chiefly on honey.

As we progressed the stream became narrower, the silence deeper. At last even the cries of the birds ceased. The wild tangle of branches, leaves, and creepers hung stiff and motionless like decorations at a theatre. It has an uncanny effect on one who sees it for the first time; one

cannot shake off the feeling that death or some other form of evil lurks behind this strange, unnatural calm, as though the eyes of a gigantic serpent were staring with motionless pupils into one's own.

The natives never altogether conquer their fear, and never venture into the forest alone. They believe that the souls of evil people dwell in the deep mud under the mangrove trees, and that it is their sighs and breathing which swallow up all other sounds.

Both Tongu and Toko knew these waters well. There, where the stream suddenly swings to the right, they paddled over to the left bank, just in the curve.

An enormous mangrove tree had fallen here, full of years. It had broken away from its aerial roots, which stuck up out of the black mud like the ribs of a skeleton. The creepers hung limply down from the adjacent trees, swaying in the air like the gigantic, broken threads of a spider's web; others still held, but were stretched to the breaking-point, as if pulled by human beings binding a giant, who in his fall had torn a gash of light reaching to the blue sky—a gash which the neighbouring trees had not yet succeeded in mending.

While Tongu held the canoe, Toko and I clambered up on the trunk, which was so soft and rotten in several places it gave way in under our feet. I expected the whole thing to collapse and drop us into the black mud, the smell of which rose, putrid and noisome, to our nostrils.

When we reached the thin end of the trunk, which lay at right angles to the river, Tongu paddled off by himself. Toko hastened to calm me, assuring me that we should find him again all right.

The fallen trunk had helped us over the worst of the morass, but we were compelled to jump from branch to branch the last piece of the way, until we could land on ground which was less swampy, and into which our feet barely sank.

The conditions presently became more favourable; we were at the edge of a clearing. We made for it, and stood suddenly among ferns which grew breast-high; beyond, we came to some tall *alang-alang* grass, with clear blue sky overhead.

There, on the farther side of the clearing, were the bread-fruit trees which Toko had mentioned, their shining dark-green crowns stretching out their boughs to one another, heavy with large, broad leaves, each the size of a man's chest. Two

birds about the size of owls suddenly fluttered up over the tree-tops.

I raised my gun, but Toko seized my arm.

"They are vampire bats!" he whispered. "Wait till they settle. It is their sleeping time now; the main body of them are already at rest among the trees."

They circled a few times as if seeking a suitable tree, then by suddenly drawing in their wing-membrane against their bodies, fell vertically downwards. As they reached the tree-tops they spread their wings again until they found a place of rest. With a faint flap they struck the leaves. A subdued whistling and snarling noise arose from the flock which had been asleep and was now rudely disturbed. The scraping of leaves against one another showed us how the branches sank under the additional burden.

We remained still for some minutes until all was quiet. Then we crept cautiously towards them.

In the tree-tops, in the cool, dark shade of the leaves, they hung high up along the branches, in innumerable rows. They hung like hams in a provision merchant's loft, head downwards, wrapped in their wing-mebranes, silent and motionless. Not the faintest sound was to be heard.

Any one not knowing what they were, could not possibly have suspected them to be alive; the nests of the potter-bird perhaps, or some other similar animal, but living and breathing creatures, never.

I took careful aim and fired, but the bat remained hanging apparently undisturbed. Not even wounded, thought I. I fired again—same result! It was incredible; I had never in my life shot so badly. I prepared to shoot again, but in the same moment the flock took alarm. Heads with pointed ears reappeared from under the wing-membrane. Wings quivered and were extended. In a trice they had risen above the branches, shrieking like young monkeys; burst through the leaves; vanished. One only remained hanging. But all at once, without the least warning, it loosened its hold, and without opening its wings, fell silently to the ground, as if it had been suspended by a string which had suddenly broken.

Toko, who had reserved his arrows until finding some less elevated game, screamed with laughter at my astonishment. He, of course, knew that they frequently remain hanging by their big toes fully five minutes after death. It is only when the sinew is quite relaxed that the creature falls of its own weight.

That was the explanation of my bad marksmanship. We now walked from tree to tree, seeking those which had not been frightened by the shooting. At last, some distance farther on, we found another flock. I shot a couple, more out of curiosity than any desire for sport, for it was mere target shooting. I had also to husband my ammunition; the time would soon come when I must be content with a bow and arrow.

The natives don't kill vampire bats as a rule. The men may not eat them and they hang too high in the trees for a vertical bow-shot. Only those which settle in the cultivated bread-fruit trees are mercilessly killed, because they eat the fruit. The cunning bats know this quite well, and only go there when it is quite dark.

The last one I shot flapped its downy wings feebly in its fall, but when I picked it up, its eyes were quite dull. Under the wings, however, which had again closed together, I noticed a movement, and upon pulling them back I found a young bat with its arms and legs outstretched clasping its mother round the body. The young one's thin wing-film clung so tightly to its mother that we could not separate the two. It was only just born, and thin as a skeleton, with a weird old man's head. It took not the slightest notice

of me; its whole being was concentrated on its snout, which continued to pull and suck at the dead mother's udder, which was of a lighter colour than the body. The young one itself was not hit at all.

We proceeded farther, through grass and breast-high ferns, until we again reached a clearing.

"Our Fathers' Stone!" shouted Toko, pointing ahead. A moment later we were there.

In reality it was a ruin, consisting of a rectangular courtyard surrounded by four broken-down walls formed of enormous, oblong blocks of basalt. In one wall was an opening resembling a doorway.

A small stone basin, overgrown with ferns, stood at one side brimming over with fresh clear water, which apparently filtered up from some subterranean spring.

Toko knew very little about the origin of the walls. He could only tell me that they had been built to defend "Our Fathers," a numerous and powerful tribe which was constantly at war with the other islands, and possessed canoes far larger and swifter than our present ones, in which it made expeditions and raids to distant islands, the names of which he did not know.

CHAPTER FOUR

IT was already well past midday. We set about finding Tongu.

Toko took his bearings by the sun, but kept halting and sniffing about him like a setter.

"What are you sniffing?" I asked him.

"The mangrove swamp," he answered.

When he had once settled on the course he went steadily forward. Soon we could see the mangrove copse. Toko again took his bearings carefully before proceeding. We were forced once more to climb and wrestle with the hanging creepers. The grass disappeared, and the ground became swampy again. We balanced ourselves on rotting trunks, which frequently collapsed under our feet, leaving us hanging to some branch or other, which we dared not relinquish before finding a new foothold.

Once as I hung there helpless, my arms outstretched, my cartridge belt tightly strapped round my waist to prevent it getting lost, I thought to myself how lucky it was there were no gorillas

or other large beasts of prey on the islands—not to mention poisonous snakes. The sole specimen of the latter is the little *siguaganti*, and that is quite harmless.

At last we reached the stream. We were so near its outlet that we could see the lagoon, which was overhung with vegetation just like the one we had left a few hours before. The stream apparently cuts off a corner from the island.

"This is not the same stream as before," Toko explained, "it is its daughter." [1]

Toko gave the usual signal-whistle, which resembles the jodelling throat-notes in a nightingale's song, but is much longer.

There was a pause. Then came Tongu's answer from the direction of the lagoon, and soon after the canoe came gliding towards us from the mouth of the river.

After a bite of food we paddled out along the lagoon, which was bounded on either side by long stretches of jungle.

When we at last arrived at the lagoon it was as smooth and shining as a mirror. The reef was no longer bathed in breakers, only the extreme top of it being visible. I took the oar from Tongu, who had paddled without intermis-

[1] Tributary.

sion since early morning, and we progressed for a long space in silence. Tongu fell asleep, his head between his doubled-up knees, while Toko sat staring straight before him with half-closed, unseeing eyes.

Once, when I asked what he was thinking of, he answered, "Air!" Observing my surprise, he added, "Myself and the air!" Then, evidently considering the subject disposed of, he returned to his meditations.

The lagoon widened; the coast, covered with strange bushes, receded. Farther inland we could see scattered groups of cocoa-nut palms, a sure sign of a village. And it was not long before we saw palm trees reaching to the coast; then came a small grove of trees in orderly rows; finally the first yellow hut-roof gleamed through the green trunks.

Simultaneously the strand broadened. A canoe lying upon the sands roused Toko from his reverie. It was about twice the size of ours, and had a mast on which hung a square mat of fibre for a sail. Fastened to the gunwale were bamboo rods reaching out to the floating keel.

"A royal canoe!" he shouted, dropping his oar.

Our King had a similar one, but this canoe was bigger and of better quality, with its bow

carved and its sail dyed yellow with turmeric, which the women use to paint themselves with before dancing.

Their canoe-house was also superior to ours, although ours was the pride of the village. Toko poked Tongu into wakefulness lest he should miss the sight. The latter rubbed his eyes hard, and stared for a long time at the strange village.

"It is Wattiwua!" said he finally. "It is more wealthy than ours."

Toko murmured something about coming again with many canoes and capturing it, but Tongu, who was sufficiently clever and experienced to bow to superior force, said:

"They are great, and we are small. Let us pay them a visit; rich people are good hosts!"

I acquiesced at once.

The village, which now came into view round the end of the point, lay in a semicircular bay. The strongly roofed huts standing on pointed beams looked very inviting. The sun beat down upon us. My mouth watered like that of a thirsty man on finding a bottle when I saw the delicious shade there under the palm trees.

The people had already seen us. Some men and women, preceded by a group of children,

came down to the flat beach, the men with the left hand behind their backs clasping the right arm. This, I think, they practise to maintain an upright and dignified bearing.

After looking at us for a while they began talking excitedly together, shading their eyes and staring at us.

"It is you!" said Tongu; "they have heard of 'the stranger' on the island."

Tongu took my oar and raised it above his head; they immediately began to call and beckon to us.

"We are welcome!" said he, smiling. Toko and he paddled towards the shore with all their might, Toko's youthful face quivering with expectation, his thick nostrils working incessantly.

When the canoe was near land and we were preparing to step out and wade, two of the men suddenly ran towards us shouting something I could not understand, stretching out their arms warningly towards us.

"They wish to carry the stranger to land!" said Tongu, with a gratified smile at the honour shown to us.

I considered myself in no respect superior to the natives, and preferred always to be treated as

their equal. I therefore refused the honour offered me and pointed to Tongu.

"Take him!" I said. "He is both older and more bearded than I."

The natives were astounded at my speaking their tongue, and looked doubtfully at one another and at Tongu. Tongu frowned disapprovingly, and said that I must not slight their hospitality.

After that I yielded. The bigger native quickly took me on his back, while the other, after hesitating a moment, measuring Tongu's dignity with his own, resolutely seized the bearded one and carried him, too, pick-a-back to land.

We were borne at a slow trot over the hard ground, while Toko, assisted by some of the other natives, lifted the canoe out of the water. When we were comfortably seated under the palms, the men and women surrounded us and made a thorough examination of my fair hair, my light eyes, my light skin, my clothes, my buttons; above all, my gun. As soon as the ceremonial betel-nut chewing was finished, and cocoa-nut milk and bananas were placed before us, they overwhelmed me with all possible manner of questions. Because I could not answer them all, some

of them waxed impatient and pulled at my clothes to attract attention.

I had to tell them where I came from, how I came to the island, where I had learnt their language, and so on. I could see from their eyes that nearly all my answers were unintelligible to them; however, they made the most of the situation, sucking in with all their five naked senses as much as possible of the unique occurrence.

Tongu assisted me in his solemn and bearded manner, elucidating my speech, and adding what he thought I had forgotten, or had not bragged about sufficiently. He could not have done it better if he had been a showman in the market-place displaying his dancing bear.

In the meanwhile a fire was made for preparing the evening meal,[1] and the women ran about fetching the food.

Then we heard merry talking and singing up behind the huts. It was the young men and women of the village returning from their work in the fields. They walked in twos, bearing poles between them from which hung bunches of bananas. Others balanced upon their heads baskets full of yams and *taro* roots.

[1] Bread-fruit and *taro* roots baked between red-hot stones and eaten together with minced bananas and chopped-up cocoa-nuts.

The moment the children heard them, they rushed away to communicate the great news of our arrival. The young men and girls stared at us for a few seconds with their mouths wide open. Then they came towards us, two by two, as fast as they could with their burdens.

Outside a long building, probably the Common House, with a high gable painted all over with geometrical figures, was an open space like a market-place. Having arrived there, they threw down their burdens and ran the rest of the way towards us.

"I love you!" [1] I shouted to them.

They were so amazed that they forgot to return my greeting, until at last one of the women smiled, and then another. Finally they all began shouting at the top of their voices, "I love you!" They came right up to me, crowding round the fire, each one seeking to secure a place as near as possible to me.

A couple of the bearded elders grumbled at the disturbance. One of them even seized a blazing stick from the fire and threatened a cheeky boy with it. After a while they all quieted down.

No one on earth can stare with his whole body and soul as do these young natives. Their

[1] The usual greeting.

jaw drops, and they hardly breathe as they suck in the impression through eyes, ears, mouth, and nose. At least that is what it looks like. I am perfectly certain that they never forget in their whole lives the impressions thus acquired.

There was one, a girl, especially noticeable: small, with the softest rounded shoulders and the clearest, silkiest, light brown skin I have ever beheld. Her forehead curved gently, half hidden by her shining, curly hair, which formed a dark cloud round her ears. Her head was covered with flowers picked in the fields. Round her neck hung a wreath of small yellow blossoms, which she kept touching with her hand to make certain they were still there. Lost in contemplation, she stood in silence, with one hand curved under her firm, half-developed breast. She was barely fourteen years old, on the verge of womanhood. Her pointed, regular teeth, which she exposed generously every time I looked towards her, had only just been coloured.

These young brown girls, just admitted to the Common House, defy competition in the art of staring. Their glance is more daring than that of any European woman, but nevertheless strangely chaste, clean, innocent. It conceals nothing, betraying each inquiry, each desire, each

impulse which enters their minds. There is no flippancy, no giggling, no secret sensuality. Proud of their own natural tendencies, they take and give without reservation, without shame. All that they do, they do thoroughly.

It is because of these mild and noble women that for many years I desired nothing better than to live the rest of my life upon this island. But now, alas, it cannot be.

It is because of these women that I cannot now in my loneliness saunter along the Boulevard in the evening and see the civilized demi-mondaine's shameless smile without being utterly disgusted. Female beasts would be a flattering name for the latter. They are beings in whom the human has first of all debased the animal, with the result that the degraded animal has turned in despair and killed the human. They have befouled nature's holy source— "By their works ye shall know them!"

I could not resist looking at this lovely child, and I saw how all her senses felt my admiration for her. Her mouth parted in a quiet smile, an expression crept into her eyes which I have frequently observed in the native woman. I regard it as nature's primitive expression of woman's desire to give. At once shining and dull, almost

expressionless, like a ripe black grape on the point of bursting.

By the time we had eaten our fill, the sun had set with the usual tropical suddenness. I could distinguish nothing of the girl except the glint of the camp fire in her eyes. Soon after she rose from her place; a moment later she was at my side. I felt her warm shoulder, firm and bare against my arm, while the intoxicating smell of her spiced hair filled my nostrils.

The natives are ignorant of kissing. They would be very surprised, perhaps disgusted, if they saw two people put their masticating organs together. When a man desires a woman he places his palm under her breast, one or both; if she is acquiescent, she places one or both hands on the back of his neck.

I was well aware that it is not good form in the islands to make love to girls other than "joyless widows," when a guest in a strange village. I knew also that it is not proper for a girl to give her love to a man from a strange village. Nevertheless, I could not resist, now that she had seated herself so close to me.

But it was too late. We were already discovered. In fact, we were the centre of attention.

The young men and women were going to their

common slumber in the long house, and they had already missed her. They were calling out something from up there, not once but several times. I understood from her start that it was her name they shouted.

Then a young fellow, possibly her brother, came back and leaned forward over the fire staring at us, muttering and making signs to her. When that was of no avail, one of the elder men pushed her from behind. Although he spoke in an undertone, I overheard him say that she ought to be ashamed of herself for sitting with a stranger, and above all a stranger who had a loincloth over his whole body.

I neither wished nor dared to break the guest-law. With a deep sigh I followed her with my eyes, as she went away without a word, without even a backward glance—away to sleep among young men of her own race.

Then I lay down under the palms between Tongu and Toko, and slept soundly beneath the starry sky, which says nothing and understands all.

CHAPTER FIVE

ONE morning I accompanied the young people to their work in the fields. Winawa was among them. Her glance was like a flash of light—pulsating, vibrant. Her hair was fairer than usual, and rippled with small, close curls, which glinted in the sun. Her shoulders were rather too broad, but her arms were smooth and round and dimpled at the elbows. As she breathed, chains of shells quivered and shook over the hollow between her soft round breasts. Our party consisted of Toko; undersized Kadu with his pointed dog-teeth; and slim, silent Fagoda, with his fixed, melancholy glance.

Among the women were Awa, with small, firm breasts high above her plump stomach; stately Muwa, with long, black, frizzy hair, as coarse as her mind, standing out behind her ears like an ostrich feather; short, compact Sakalawa with strong hips, and prettily turned light mahogany legs. She was outspoken and cheerful, and

laughed at the slightest joke. Then there was Milawa, with her low forehead and thick, sullen lips which she was perpetually smacking. She was a great favourite, chubby and affectionate, with plump, pretty shoulders. Finally, the broad-nosed Nanuki, with eyes that always followed you about. She was a trifle hump-backed, and was reserved and passionate.

We knelt down in two rows and removed the fresh shoots from the *taro* plants so that the two innermost leaves, which we did not touch, might grow better. In addition, we loosened the earth round the bulb, and pulled up the weeds.

The sun beat down on my back, burning me through my white coat. The girls sang as they worked, each with her own words, mostly incomprehensible nonsense, probably made up on the spur of the moment.

Toko was leader of our row. Kadu was just in front of me. The sweat ran in shining drops down his back, disappearing under his red loincloth.

In the women's row Muwa was number one. I managed to be opposite Winawa, whose smooth arms shone in the sun, dazzling my eyes.

The women always plant flowers, wherever they can. They planted some here between the

taro bushes, when they put in the bulbs two months previously. The chief ones are the croton with its variegated leaves, which the natives love, and the shining yellow koleus, which they plait into wreaths for necklaces.

Butterflies fluttered up from every bush we touched; we ceaselessly brushed away the insects, which buzzed in swarms round our ears. Scented waves (reminiscent of vanilla or heliotrope) floated through the motionless, sun-stifled air. I think they emanated from a kind of gardenia which bloomed on our left.

In spite of the heat it was all very enjoyable. The girls sang as they moved from bush to bush. They kept stretching their necks in search of flowers, and when they saw one they wanted—for each had her favourite—they threw themselves flat upon the ground, plucked it, rubbed it over their nose and lips, as if about to eat it, and then put it in their hair.

The sun sparkled and gleamed on their perspiring backs, which resemble nothing so much as light brown horse-meat, steaming in the warm air.

Kadu chewed betel-nut and at intervals spat sideways in long, dark red stripes which wriggled like worms on the loose white earth.

At last the heat was too much for my back; I threw off my coat and sat there naked to the waist like the others.

"Look at the Red Man!" cried Sakalawa. The girls all called me this because of my hair, which has a reddish tinge, and also because of my red cheeks. The men called me the White Man, as they do all Europeans.

The singing stopped abruptly; the girls swung round on their knees to stare at me with inquisitive, amazed eyes.

"Did you think only my face was red?" I asked, turning towards them.

"Ai! Ai!" [1]

One after the other they leaped to their feet and came nearer to examine me, front and back. My skin was, of course, discoloured with heat and sweat. Kadu turned towards me with a wide-mouthed smile, exposing his pointed teeth.

"Pig's back!" he ejaculated, smacking his lips as though invited to a feast.

Toko, offended at the insult to me, declared boldly that a red skin was a proof of wealth, and that the possessor of it deserved many wives.

Inquisitive Awa, who stood so close to me that her fat calves rubbed my elbow, could restrain

[1] Native exclamation of astonishment or admiration.

herself no longer. She poked my back cautiously with her stubby fingers.

"Ai! Ai!"

Then she stroked me gingerly with her open palm; only to step back nervously. She was not sure whether my back was nice or nasty.

Milawa, on the contrary, was quite sure that it was nice, and, smacking her sullen lips, rubbed her plump shoulder up and down between my shoulder blades, her hands clasped behind her back.

Nanuki's dark eyes were also fixed upon me as she stood there motionless on her slim ankles, as if rooted to the spot.

Winawa alone, the very one I wanted to come to me, remained where she was. She cast quick side-glances at intervals, her lips parted, her breast rising and falling rapidly.

"Winawa, come too!" I cried, stretching out my arms towards her.

She pulled a handful of leaves from a *taro* bush and threw them at me, at the same time throwing back her head like a skittish foal. It was a good sign.

Everything she did delighted me; she was graceful to the finger-tips; the way she interlaced her fingers over her knee and leaned slightly forward

when she listened. But had I attempted to kiss her, she would have imagined that I was about to eat her.

"Have your women also red backs?" she asked.

"They are shining white!"

"Have they also a shirt over their whole body, as you have a loincloth?" Awa demanded.

"They are covered all over with a mat which is fastened tightly round their neck and waist."

"Don't they show their breasts?" exclaimed Milawa, amazed.

"No, not as a rule."

"Then how do you know when a girl is pretty?"

"You don't know, and are very often cheated."

Milawa puffed contemptuously, ashamed that members of her sex dared clothe themselves so indecently.

"How can they nurse their babies?" asked Sakalawa, who had been sitting for some time considering the matter.

"They prefer not to use their breasts for that purpose, but instead give their children milk from a pumpkin." [1]

"Where do they obtain the milk?"

"From big, red, four-legged animals."

[1] The natives have no other word for flask.

They all sat with their palms extended, gaping with astonishment.

Suddenly, as if at the word of command, they burst out laughing. Even the stately Muwa slapped her hands on her fat thighs.

They didn't believe a word of it!

"Are your legs red too?" asks Sakalawa, after another interval of thought.

"Yes, certainly."

"Show us them!" said Milawa, leaning forward, her hands resting on her plump knees. I turned my trousers up above my knees as far as I could.

"Ai! Ai!"

Milawa instinctively shrank back, her eyes glued to the extraordinary sight. Winawa's shining orbs almost started from their sockets.

After an interval of dumbfounded silence, Fagoda of the melancholy glance spoke: "Come, let us dream!"

It is a magic formula; all jumped up and shook the earth from them, while Toko ran towards some plants growing isolated from the rest. They were *kawa-kawa* plants. He cleaned the root, broke it up into small pieces, and gave one to each woman.

"Let me!" they all shouted at the top of their

voices, crowding round me as I lay on my coat in the shade. They pushed and shoved one another in their efforts to approach nearer, opening their mouths wide and pushing back their lips with their fingers, to show that their teeth were clean and sound, and that their palates were without cold or any inflammation. Winawa alone held back, although I could see from her bulging eyes that her whole heart was with me.

I pointed my finger at her. "You shall chew for me!" I said.

She immediately squatted down, and without a word began to masticate.

Then Kuda, Toko, and Fagoda each chose a woman to chew for him. Those left over threw themselves sulkily upon their backs, and chewed for themselves.

The woman chosen by a man to chew for him is the one he prefers to dream of during his trance; and the fact of her chewing produces the desired result. If he fails to dream of her, it is a proof that she has fixed her thoughts upon another man during the chewing, which is a direct insult, for she could have declined his invitation.

Winawa finished. With bashful grace she gave me a cocoa-nut shell, into which she had

spat out the *kawa* juice, poured into it milk from a freshly opened nut, and with downcast eyes seated herself on the ground near me.

I had never drunk *kawa* before; it tasted like soapy water, flavoured with sugar. But I nevertheless swallowed it hurriedly, for the sake of her of whom I desired to dream.

We all lay flat on our back, with knees drawn up and hands under our heads. One by one I saw the others fall over on their sides, their eyes shut, and a peculiar, satisfied smile on their faces. Suddenly Winawa, whom I could see from where I lay, seemed to rise up and down and sway from side to side. She became slimmer and fairer, and after a while pulled herself into a crouching attitude, sitting there smiling and seductive.

When I awoke, the shadow from the tree touched the *taro* bushes; about two hours had passed.

The others were already at work in the fields. They squatted on their haunches grinning at me when I staggered towards them. But Winawa went on working and did not meet my eyes.

. . . . . .

When we had returned to the village, eaten our supper, and watched the camp fire's flames die down in the black ashes, the young people rose to

their feet preparatory to retiring to rest in the Common House.

Toko and Kadu and Fagoda each took possession of his woman.

Winawa sat apart by herself, as if waiting; while the others cast inquisitive and suggestive glances from her to me.

I sat down by her side.

A shiver ran through her, but she neither moved away nor returned my caress.

Then came one whom they call "the great hunter," and stood in front of her, glaring at her.

When I rose to follow her to the Common House, he obstructed my passage, at the same time seizing Winawa by the arm and pushing her behind him.

Determined not to be thus thwarted, I thrust him aside and sprang towards the door; but instantly the young men crowded round me, murmuring threateningly.

Toko hastily approached, touched my arm, and said gravely: "No stranger may sleep in the Common House!"

Infuriated, I hurried home to Tongu, cursing this tribal instinct which had twice robbed me of the woman whom I had chosen, and who had herself chosen me.

CHAPTER SIX

ONE dark night Tongu, Toko, and I paddled out with the canoe to catch flying-fish. It was the King's favourite dish, and with it I had decided to pay my royal tax. Besides, I had an ulterior motive.

While Tongu held the oars, Toko and I waved our torches—made of cocoa-nut fibre tied to long bamboo poles—high in the air, making the rays of light gleam and dance over the dark waters.

The flying-fish, their wet wing-fins glittering like silver, left the water half hypnotized by the light, and rushed straight towards the smoking red flame.

We transfixed them in their flight, killing them quickly one by one, until we were exhausted with slaughter. There were many more than we could deal with, although we were all experts and never failed to kill with each thrust.

Next morning I again ransacked my sea-chest, and chose an old umbrella and a battered straw hat for His Majesty.

For a long time I was puzzled to know what to give the critical Wahuja, who is the King's adviser, and must therefore be conciliated. At last I found a pair of spectacles which had belonged to my uncle in Java. The fact of Wahuja being shortsighted would make the gift specially acceptable. Long White-Ears would, so to speak, recover the eyes of youth.

We presented ourselves all three before the King late in the afternoon, Toko carrying the tribute in Tongu's largest basket, and I, the gifts. Wahuja, whether by instinct or from information received concerning our last night's fishing expedition, saw us first, and came sneaking down from the verandah. He drew us aside under the shade of a *pisang* palm, where we could not be observed from the house.

I greeted him native fashion, telling him of my errand. He glanced thoughtfully at the basket, and stood chewing his toothless gums without speaking.

Then I produced the spectacles. Might I be allowed to give him back the eyes of his youth? I put them on myself to show how to use them. He took them cautiously and sniffed them, jumping back shuddering when his nose happened to touch the glass.

"It is petrified water!" said I in explanation. He trembled with emotion all the time he was putting them over his nose and behind his ears. Toko and Tongu were also frightened, and withdrew to a safe distance.

He peered up in the air with mouth wide open, but could see nothing at all. "Fog!" he ejaculated, wrinkling his nose disapprovingly.

I then held my hand close before his eyes. He gave a violent start when he saw it clearly, and suddenly his loose old mouth grinned, until the corners nearly reached his hairy white ears.

He looked towards a *pisang* leaf which hung down just in front of him: the same marvellous result! He stared at Tongu's beard: extraordinary!

"Witchcraft!" he muttered solemnly, removing the spectacles carefully, and examining them minutely from every possible angle, fingering the lenses with shaking fingers.

He then turned his right ear towards me, a habit of his when giving audience. "What do you desire of me, White Man?" he whined, once more assuming the mask of diplomacy.

"O most wise and mighty Wahuja, thou who hast the King's ear!" I began, according to a formula supplied by Tongu.

"Is it a woman you want?" he broke in impatiently.

I forgot my formula and said frankly, that I was a young man even as the other bachelors. How was it possible for me to buy a wife of Mahura's famous race when I was not allowed to choose in the same way as the others? In short: I wanted permission to sleep in the Common House. And now that I was paying a handsome tribute, the great Wahuja could not refuse to lighten the King's eyes and enlarge his heart towards me; so that I, who desired nothing better than to live and die on this happy island, with the King's foot on my neck, might be accorded the same right as the meanest man among the King's subjects.

Wahuja again fell to chewing his gums. He scratched both his hairy ears. He concentrated all his intelligence upon this difficult problem. Tongu ventured the humble suggestion that his chickens were Wahuja's, and his cocoa-nuts, whilst his house was built expressly that Wahuja should tear it down, if it pleased him to do so.

Wahuja waved him angrily away, and, turning to me, touched my clothes with his stiff fingers. "White Man," he said reproachfully, "why do

you conceal all your skin with a loincloth over your whole body?"

"It is the custom of white men."

"You wish to be one of us, yet you cover yourself up like a tortoise or a vampire bat. Do you bear the tortoise's burden? Do you fetch your food in the trees like a vampire bat?"

I stood silent, covered with confusion.

"No decent Mahura man conceals his skin!"

"Then will I discard my covering, O most wise Wahuja!"

The old diplomat had not expected such an accommodating answer; it took him by surprise. But after a moment's thought he again took up the cudgels.

"Your back is reported to be red and cold like that of a pig!" he whined.

I hinted modestly that I was born thus. Should not a decent man be proud of his skin?

Wahuja ignored my subtle use of his own logic.

"No decent Mahura man," he objected, "has a red skin. Nothing good can come from a red skin!"

Then seeing that I was losing patience, he remembered the spectacles and added in a cautious whisper: "But that which has been denied

you by your father and mother,[1] you can of course take from the earth!"

This was utterly beyond me, but Tongu understood immediately. "I will paint you with the brown earth,"[2] he said joyfully; "you will be as handsome as a king."

Wahuja turned his back; he had spoken, and considered the matter closed. It was an unsatisfactory result. I'd be hanged if I would paint my skin, to be a laughing stock for the whole of this brown village. As soon as the King was shown our gifts he became wild with joy. He at once put the straw hat on his head and opened the umbrella in the way I taught him, keeping it up during the whole audience. The court applauded vociferously, the women and children in the doorway mumbling wide-eyed their eternal, "Ai! Ai!"

The King announced that there would be a feast that evening—we already knew about it, and had chosen the day on purpose—to celebrate the building of the new fence round his cocoa-nut grove. He invited all three of us to be present.

We were given betel and cocoa-nuts.

[1] *i.e.* at birth.
[2] A kind of red ochre paint.

Just as we were finishing, we saw Wahuja come creeping forward, spectacles in hand, to hold a council with the King, who sat arrayed in straw hat and umbrella listening absent-mindedly.

Whilst we lounged about waiting for the feast to begin, we saw the dancing-girls arrive from the village dressed in all their finery, bearing armfuls of flowers.

I recognized several of the girls from my *kawa* debauch and nodded to them. Among them was Winawa, who looked longingly at me, hiding the eagerness of her stare under her half-lowered eyelids.

We followed them at a distance, and watched them disappear behind the royal residence, where the Queen squatted, presiding over the toilet preparations, surrounded with cocoa-nut shells containing all manner of dyes and cosmetics, the names of the majority of which I was ignorant.

The girls donned their necklaces and bracelets, stuck flowers in their hair and ears, showed their costumes off to one another, patting here and pulling there, cackling and quarreling, shrieking and striking themselves on the thighs with ecstasy. One by one the Queen called them before her.

She painted them on the back, breast, and neck with swift, sure strokes according to their rank, beauty, or personality, each girl following the movements of the brush closely, and smiling or sulking according to the treatment she received.

One or two of them complained bitterly, and stamped their feet on the ground, but the Queen took not the slightest notice, merely giving each one a shove in the back when she was finished, and calling the name of the next.

I saw one perky little dark-eyed wench rub the wet colouring off her breast, whilst a companion painted the brilliant design she desired on her back.

Milawa, whom I supposed so shy and retiring, made a fearful to-do. She showed herself to be a vain minx, shrieking at the top of her voice for "sun." She wanted a flaming sun on each breast. At last the Queen lost her temper, stood up and gave her such a kick in the fleshy part of the back that she tripped over and fell down.

General hilarity, while Milawa rolled about in the grass, whimpering and kicking her legs in the air with temper.

We hid behind the new bamboo fence, the occasion for the feast, and saw everything through

the stakes. When the Queen had finished and rose to inspect her work, we fled.

The invited guests, consisting of the bearded elders and other women and men of the village, arrived and seated themselves in a circle round the *tamman*, [1] inside which was the royal orchestra with their *aiwa*-drums. The girls came forward from behind the house in a delighted procession, two by two, each holding a bouquet in her upraised right hand.

They were greeted with shouts of "Ai! Ai!"; the mothers all craning their necks to watch their daughters, pruning themselves with self-satisfaction. Then the girls let themselves go.

They seated themselves in two circles, one within the other, and suddenly began turning their bodies from the hips upwards, vigourously from side to side, at the same time waving their bouquets in the air.

As soon as the tom-toms began, they sang slowly and monotonously the following song:

"We are little parrots!
Behold this green parrot!
Behold my hair!
Behold my eyes!

[1] Dancing-place.

Hear my happy shriek!
Behold this green parrot!
We are little parrots!
From Mahura—from Mahura!"

Again and again they sang the same monotonous refrain, but with each repetition the speed quickened, the small tireless drums, resembling hour-glasses, beating faster and faster. After a while the girls sprang into a kneeling position, and keeping the most perfect time they hopped right round the circle on their bare knees, the two chains revolving in opposite directions.

Suddenly with a shriek they bounded to their feet and began leaping backwards and forwards, kicking out their strong round legs to either side, their arms waving their bouquets, their heads jerking violently to and fro. The movement became more and more frenzied; at last it seemed one mad whirl of bare brown flesh, of which the separate details were indistinguishable. My brain swam. I fell back dizzy and fainting. The natives, on the contrary, were delighted, intoxicated. They all began to sing; old women rocked on their stiff hips, rheumatic old men nodded their heads violently, keeping time as they croaked the melody. All the audience joined in, sitting on their haunches, jerking their trembling arms and legs

to the music, their eyes starting out of their heads, their breasts heaving with emotion. Even the King, dressed in his clothes of state, the battered straw hat upon his head, beat time with his newly acquired umbrella, and was thoroughly happy.

Tongu and Toko had succumbed long since to the all-prevailing influence. At last, in spite of myself, I too began; my blood beat in my neck, my breath grew short and painful, my legs wobbled and trembled beneath me. Finally I let myself go as completely and utterly as all the rest. . . .

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, a shriek filled the air, a wild, horrible cry which burst simultaneously from each girl's throat. It rang clear and true in spite of its abandon, piercing my very soul. Even now it rings in my ears. The shriek died away in a long-drawn-out wail like that of a dog starving in the dark.

It was the dance's death-cry. When I recovered my senses and was able to see once more, the women lay piled together in a heaving heap, panting and exhausted, with convulsive shudders shaking their limbs, succeeded finally by complete collapse. To all appearances they lay lifeless and dead.

Now the unmarried men sprang forward. Each sought the woman who at the time belonged to him, leaving the few unmated—among whom I saw, to my great joy, Winawa—disconsolate to look after themselves.

In my excited condition, I was strongly tempted to rush forward and claim her for myself, but, realizing the fatality of such a course, I restrained myself.

I joined Tongu and the other bearded ones who were watching the women carried down to the strand; saw each man help his girl remove her soiled skirt and faded flowers; saw him bathe and rub her tired, steaming limbs, each man's sole thought being to help his loved one to recover. But when I saw Winawa compelled to do everything alone, without a helping hand, I swore a mighty oath that I would accept Wahuja's conditions, and become as brown and as naked as the most respectable Mahura man on the island.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I WAS now a full-blown citizen of Mahura Village. I paid the King's tax, took my share in the work of the bachelors, and slept in the Common House. Winawa was no longer compelled to deny me anything. I was now brown as cinnamon, and wore a bright scarlet loincloth, which Tongu took great pains to weave.

Tongu kept a strict look-out that I was not cheated of any of the rights belonging to every young Mahura man of good family.

A few of the young men disapproved of me as a stranger, and tried to raise laughter at the expense of my skin, which was inclined to run in wet weather, and required periodical renewal. They even tried to boycott me, but the women were on my side and protected me jealously. Toko was, as formerly, my sworn and trusty friend, always at my heels during the day, and sleeping as close as possible to me at night, a habit more flattering than pleasant.

In the Common House there are no reserved

places; each one has his mat, and at night places it in position on the bare, spacious bamboo floor. The Common House is a large, oblong building thatched with palm leaves. The two side walls do not reach right up to the roof, but leave a long, narrow opening about two feet wide, which, however, is sheltered from storm and rain by the projecting thatch. The openings served as ventilators, without which we should certainly have been stifled, crowded together as we were. Even as it was the air was often almost unsupportable.

There was always a great deal of shoving and quarreling at the entrance each night before we went to bed. It was caused by the scramble to get in first and secure the best sleeping-places, namely, those farthest removed from the door, where one was constantly in danger of being trodden on by any one wishing to go outside during the night.

I myself preferred to lie nearest the door, close against the wall, but all the others made a rush for the corner places at the farthest end of the building, where it is most sheltered.

It is extraordinary how quickly and quietly the woman question is arranged. I have never

yet observed fighting or noisy quarreling in this connection, men and girls pairing off, by common consent, quietly and unostentatiously. They do not change partners as often as might be expected. As a rule, the matter is settled for the woman from the very first day of her entrance into the Common House, into which she is admitted upon attaining the age of puberty. The young girl is immediately surrounded by unattached youths of about her own age, swarming and buzzing round her like bees. Flattered and pleased with the attention shown her, she looks round the gathering and quickly chooses one to be her partner, in what to her is the most serious business in life. The rejected suitors then retire, and the matter is finished.

Having chosen her mate, she sleeps on his mat in the Common House until one of two changes occurs. If the connection leads to strong infatuation, so that the man becomes afraid of losing her—for example, by the advent of a new and dangerous rival—he hastens to buy her from her father; in other words, to marry her, upon which they both remove from the Common House, where every one has an equal right. If, on the other hand, one or other of the parties does not come up to expectations; or if the man cannot or

will not pay the price which for the sake of her family and the honour of her *totem* [1] is demanded for her, then a respectable girl, knowing the respect due to her, gives her laggard suitor the cold shoulder and turns elsewhere. This she does by merely deserting her customary place at the evening meal, and seating herself by the side of her new mate, whom she has chosen, possibly for his appearance, possibly on account of his family and fortune.

If the new one acquiesces, he remains seated and all is well. Should he, however, object to his new would-be spouse, he rises and goes away to another place. The effect upon the girl of this unchivalrous treatment is either to cause perhaps a lengthening of the face, or else an angry muttering, and tearing of the grass. That is all. She soon finds a new partner somewhere else, unless the rejected suitor makes things nasty for her in some way or other, which, however, is considered very bad form, denoting a treacherous character.

Affairs are thus managed among the more sensible and decent young people, who possess a certain

[1] The natives divide themselves, according to rules as yet unknown, into family groups, each of which has its own distinguishing mark (*totem*), *e.g.* a certain bird. Members of the same family group may not intermarry.

amount of proper pride. But it may, of course, also happen that a girl sticks to her first choice, regardless of his inability to buy her; unless he is more sensible than she, and gives her up in order to marry a woman whose price is more in accord with his fortune. If not, it cannot be denied that an illegitimate connection is established which can have unfortunate consequences.

. . . . . .

Things may be all right for a time; but one day her father becomes impatient and informs his daughter that he cannot wait any longer for the capital which she represents to materialize. She must make her decision.

The poor suitor presents himself in desperation to make the best offer he can, only of course to meet with an uncompromising refusal, at the same time having the purchase price flung in his teeth.

Every well-bred Mahura girl would then bow to the inevitable and do her duty. She allows her poor suitor to disappear out of her life, taking with him that of which no one can deprive him, and chooses a new mate, this time with her brain instead of with her heart, aided perhaps in her choice by her parents.

Sometimes, however, things do not go so

smoothly. I know one case—Toko told me about it—in which, to appease her father, the girl dismissed her fiancé and chose another suitor. But the latter was merely a dummy, whom they had persuaded to act the part of lover before the public at the evening meal round the fire. At night he disappeared, and the girl continued sleeping on her old suitor's mat, a fact which could never reach the ears of the father, for all that happens in the Common House is most jealously guarded by its inmates.

The new arrangement worked successfully for a while, but when the lastest official fiancé, who was in all respects a suitable match, made no effort to claim the girl for his wife, the old man again took his daughter to task.

Again she posed as the obedient daughter; again she obeyed her father's commands, dismissing the second suitor—she could not waste all her youth in the Common House, where she would soon be one of the eldest—and choosing a third, also a good match. But he was only another dummy, playing the part for the sake of his friend, the poor suitor, and the girl still slept regularly on her lover's mat.

And so it went on, until at last the father was forced to the conclusion that his daughter was

less attractive than he had thought, for none of her suitors offered to buy her. Since there was nothing wrong with the family *totem*, he reasoned, it must be the girl who had some hidden fault.

After a painful cross-examination, the only material result of which was a good thrashing for the girl in revenge for his disappointment, the old man made the best of a bad job, and resolutely lowered her price, announcing to all and sundry that he was now selling his daughter, so to speak, at cost price.

Again a period of waiting. When the old man saw the girl still remaining on his hands he resigned himself to a certain loss, and, as a last resort, of his own accord approached the poor suitor.

The latter stood willingly and honourably by his original offer; they became man and wife, and, according to Toko, lived happily ever afterwards.

This story of true love, which fully deserves to be related in a much more detailed form—perhaps I shall do so some time in another connection—had, however, a sequel.

I fully believe what was said, that they were very happy—obstinate people, on the whole, are

happier than others—but one thing is certain, they never had a child: for now that it was desirable, it was found impossible. The reason for this melancholy fact lies in the use of a certain practice, fully permissible for an unmarried native girl, but which among civilized people is considered a serious crime, and punished severely, regardless of the stage of development at which the act is committed. A case of such a nature as the foregoing is, however, a rare exception; as a rule, affairs relating to the matrimonial market run smoothly and respectably.

When the door is shut, impenetrable darkness reigns in the Common House, and in spite of the aperture in the walls the air becomes heavy and stifling. Everything is quiet; a medley of little sounds, subdued and intangible, rises from the living carpet of hot-breathing, warm-blooded, sensuous bodies covering the floor.

A foot scrapes, a mat rustles, and like an undertone comes the deep purring guttural whereby the natives express their natural and unrestrained *joie de vivre.* The whole resembles a gigantic dovecot in the twilight, before the birds have fallen asleep; or a fowl-house at dawn, just before the youngest cock begins to flap his wings and crow.

Sometimes, but very rarely, is heard an angry expostulation, caused by an accidental kick or the like, but it is immediately hissed into silence. And when any one snores so loudly that he wakes others, he is thrust relentlessly outside the door and left to sleep in the open. He whom they call "the great hunter" exercises self-assumed and undisputed authority over all. He is of the family of Wahuja, the most exalted in the village.

Contrary to public opinion, and to my own former belief, the natives, whom we so rashly label "savages," are neither savage nor unbridled in the expression of their passions. Quite the reverse in this case, their impulses, although strong, being quickly exhausted; as befitting free, healthy creatures from whom no veil hides Nature's naked breast.

One day, as we were walking past the outermost huts in the village, on our way home from work in the fields, Winawa stopped and listened, looking fixedly up in the air. I could hear no sound, but she seized my arm excitedly, and began calling in the direction of a bread-fruit tree situated alongside her father's hut, where she lived as a child.

When the others had gone on, leaving us two

behind, she again called out in a supplicating voice: "My *bewa*, my *bewa!*"

Receiving no reply, she approached nearer to the hut, still grasping my arm, as if wishing to show me something, all the while gazing towards the tree and emitting the deep, native jodelling call.

There came a sudden disturbance in the air; down from a high branch dropped a vampire bat with its wings closed. When it had fallen half-way to the ground it opened the wings with a jerk and balanced hovering just above Winawa, who held out her arms towards it, laughing and talking to it with all the tender words she knew, her eyes shining with happiness and emotion.

It remained, however, hovering over her, wriggling its snout and opening its mouth so that its white teeth shone in her face. At intervals it turned its head and fastened its dark, clever eyes on me.

Winawa signalled to me to retire, and scarcely had I obeyed her, when the creature flew down and settled in her hair, its wings flapping affectionately about her ears.

Her whole face broke into a smile, she clasped her arms round the bat, lifted it carefully down and pressed it passionately to her bosom.

Then she raised the hand holding the banana straight up in the air and let the creature crawl along her naked arm until it reached the fruit.

It seized the banana with a quick movement of its snout and ripped the peel off with its sharp, white teeth, still hugging her arm with its claws and wings. Then it crawled down again, and held its mouth containing the banana towards her, so that she too could take a bite. The two thus ate from either end until their lips met.

The girl took the bat in her hands and threw it from her like a ball high in the air, at the same time springing with supple grace to her feet. And while it hung flapping above her, she began to play tag with its wings.

It tore itself loose; it snapped playfully at her; but the moment I approached, it flew away and would not return.

"My *bewa* doesn't like you!" she said sorrowfully, looking angrily at me. At last she came away, but turned round several times and called to it as long as it remained visible.

"It is angry with you, because I have neglected it!" she said, almost in tears. She was silent and depressed the whole evening.

From that day Winawa was displeased with me; perhaps she divined my feelings with regard

to the creature—which is considered holy by the natives. To me it was nothing but a large-sized bat, and the disgust and nausea which I felt on seeing its snout touch her mouth, as they devoured the same banana together, were well-nigh impossible for me to conceal.

When I told Tongu about it, he said it was quite the usual thing for young girls to tame the young bats so that they would eat out of their hands. Once tamed, the creature would always answer its mistress's call.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"THERE has been a feast at the King's House," Toko, who always seemed to know everything, announced one day. "What was it for?"

"To celebrate a virgin initiation; the youngest of his daughters has got her skirt. She left the Women's House yesterday after having her body tattoed and her teeth stained. Her name is Ali, and this evening she becomes one of us."

Just before sunset we all assembled round the fire in expectant silence. Thinking of this new girl who would soon belong to us, we threw out our chests, and scowled fiercely at one another, each man seeking to spread himself out so as to leave a vacant place by his side.

The women were all displeased. They sat with sour expressions, snapping sulkily at their cavaliers. One or two of them looked positively anxious.

Suddenly the space between two of the farthermost huts was lighted by a clear, shining ray from

the setting sun, throwing into glowing silhouette a soft, girlish form with high, firm bosom.

I recognized her immediately—the charming little thing that stared at me from the doorway at my first royal audience, and was removed by her mother for smiling at me and answering my nod. She came forward slowly, her hands clasped behind her back, her head shyly lowered, walking between Wahuja and an elderly woman, her mother. The loincloth to which she was so unused irritated and impeded the movements of her legs.

Presently when she drew nearer and saw all eyes fixed upon her, her soft, plastic mouth stretched in a wide, forced smile, intended to show off her badge of maidenhood, her splendid brown teeth.

"Ai! Ai!" the men shouted admiringly, while the women rocked with envy.

Ali's head was the most beautiful shape imaginable, a perfect oval; her hair was cut quite short, leaving innumerable tiny, dark curls covering her temples.

Her ears were small and round, and set close to the head; her eyebrows formed a faint, light crescent above her bright young eyes, which shone

with pleasure and expectation at the thought of the new life about to begin.

About her neck she wore two chains of the little white shells, which are also used for money, and in addition a large white circular ornament —of what material I could not distinguish—on which were painted figures.

She was beautiful, judged even by European standards. Remarkably enough, although the native idea of beauty is far removed from the civilized ideal, they nevertheless accorded the girl a full-hearted appreciation.

She was so delighted with her triumphant debut that, no longer content with merely showing her teeth, she gurgled with laughter, her soft, innocent eyes throwing shyly curious glances at our faces.

"Ai! Ai!" So we expressed our admiration and delight. One handed her necklaces; another squeezed her firm, round arms; Kadu ran his hand down her downy back to feel its smooth texture, and one of the women fingered her skirt, admiring its fine weave and colour.

The tight skirt annoyed Ali—totally unused to clothing of any kind—and she made a quick, impulsive gesture to tear it off. Every one screamed with laughter as her mother smacked her fingers and pulled the skirt down again.

The longer I gazed upon the girl the more beautiful I found her; Winawa was old and ugly in comparison. The latter, who had never forgiven me since the encounter with the vampire bat, and obviously intended to desert me as soon as she could secure another suitor, nevertheless objected to being deserted first and, instinctively sensing the danger, began to hiss softly under her breath, like a cat preparing to defend itself.

Ali's roving eyes fell on me: they grew larger and larger, while her mouth gaped with astonishment. She recognized my face, no longer red and ridiculous, but brown like the faces of her own race. And my white loincloth? Transformed into a brown, respectable Mahura skin, together with the most beautiful scarlet loincloth imaginable!

Her interest in me was observed by all, and caused general dissatisfaction. Kadu placed himself between us that she might admire him instead, but she stepped aside, and finding that failed pushed him away with her hands. At last she could restrain her curiosity no longer; she came right up to me and asked: "Are you the red man who smiled at me at the King's House?"

"Yes!" I replied, feeling proud and happy at the distinction accorded me.

She again looked me over carefully, then putting out her forefinger and scratching my shoulder cautiously, demanded with a thunderstruck air: "Have you grown a fresh skin?"

"It is brown earth!" shouted the others with one accord, throwing into the explanation as much contempt as they dared, for fear of Toko and the secret power of my gun, which was in Tongu's safe keeping.

"Ai! Ai!" cried the girl, retreating with a doubtful smile. I made myself as fascinating as possible, contracting my muscles, and singing a European song which I knew from experience appealed to the natives.

In spite of the attempts of the other men to drown my voice with their guttural jodelling, Ali fixed her whole attention upon me, her shining eyes gazing raptly into mine.

I was filled with pride at the consciousness of my superiority, and firmly determined to make her mine. If only I had had my gun with me—but lacking that I performed a feat at which I am expert, and which not one of the natives could imitate: I turned a series of somersaults on the sand before her eyes.

For a moment she was terrified, but when she saw me erect and smiling before her, she shouted

a delighted, "Ai! Ai!" and would have nothing further to do with the others.

The girls had in the meanwhile been baking *taro* bread[1] and bread-fruit; and picking out the small packets of leaves from the glowing stones, gave each one of us a share.

But no one would sit down; each man pressed as closely as possible to Ali; for now the critical moment had arrived, the significance of which her mother had taught her.

She knew that she must seat herself by the side of the man on whose mat she desired to sleep.

In consideration of the fact that she was the King's daughter, although only by a secondary wife, Wahuja and the elderly woman awaited with interest this, the girl's first, unaided choice.

My knowledge of women told me that my best course was to keep in the background.

And I was quite right. At first she was piqued, half surprised, half hurt, at my being the only one of the crowd not to press round her. But when I looked at her, smiling right into her eyes and nodding, as I had done at the King's House, she immediately understood. She returned my nod

[1] The crushed or scraped out *taro* root is mixed with shredded cocoa-nut, made into loaves, wrapped in leaves, and finally baked between red-hot stones.

in the same manner as on the former occasion; and I read in her eyes that she remembered, and was conscious of her importance. Just let her mother try putting her aside by the scruff of the neck now!

She pushed out of her way all those who stood between us pluming themselves, and the next instant was sitting at my side, leaning trustfully against my shoulder.

Wahuja seemed to applaud her decision; the old reprobate counted on securing a drink by telling me that his influence brought it all about!

Now that the affair was settled, the others, realizing nothing more could be done, sat down, uttering deep sighs and grunts of dissatisfaction.

Winawa, however, in spite of her recent indifference, was deeply indignant. She hissed through her half-open mouth; then, suddenly coming to a quick decision, planted herself down at Toko's side, putting her hand deliberately upon his neck, wanting it to be clearly understood that she discarded me in favour of a man regarded by everybody as my servant.

Toko fidgeted uneasily, not because he did not care for Winawa; quite the reverse, but he did not wish to anger me, and looked questioningly in my direction. When I smiled reassuringly he

at once accepted the situation; but Winawa, disappointed at the effect of her experiment, immediately became less affectionate towards him.

The night that followed—how can I ever describe it, Ali was heavenly, laughable, maddening, grave, tearful, and sensual,—but above all, heavenly! I shall content myself with telling how it began. On our way to the Common House, where she was for the first time in her life about to sleep on a man's mat, I made some admiring remarks about the beautiful tattoo design on her stomach—a flaming sun encircling her navel, which was painted to resemble a wide-open eye. To this she answered, beaming with happiness at her new, adult magnificence, that that was a mere nothing. "No—just look at this!"

And completely devoid of shame, as eagerly as a European girl showing off a new dress to a bosom friend, she tore off her loincloth so that I might behold the brilliant zigzag patterns which encircled both her legs.

She was extremely proud of the tattooing, and stood for some time stroking it admiringly with her hands. She had evidently expected much stronger praise from me, but I was so taken aback that I could scarcely utter a word.

So commenced that wonderful night—a night which bound utter strangers together, disregarding and defying so-called civilization—bound us together for the whole of our lives—for the whole of her life.

CHAPTER NINE

WE were very happy, Ali and I. Each night she fell asleep in my arms; each morning she awoke in the same passionate embrace. Her dainty, melodious voice twittered in my ears the whole day long; for she followed me about like a shadow, watching that no evil should befall me.

Many a time she seized me suddenly by the arm and drew me away from a tree under which I wished to rest, exclaiming, "Mumut!" [1] Upon my ridiculing her she would point seriously to one or another unmistakable sign. This or that bird—the incarnation of some evil spirit, of which she knew many—had left a mark upon its branches. Or if certain birds sat in the tree above our heads, she would invariably chase them away with stones or shouts.

[1] A person's "mumut" is anything of any description that the person leaves behind, *e. g.* expectoration, footmarks, etc. etc. It is over such traces that a spell can be cast, for which reason "mumut" has come to mean witchcraft in general.

One evening as we stood gazing together up into the dark, glittering sky, a shooting star sped gleaming across the heavens. A loud scream burst from her lips, and she flung her arms round me, her body trembling with terror.

She told me that a shooting star was an evil spirit come from the sky to fetch its chosen victim for sacrifice.

Anything she valued greatly she gave immediately to me, and was not satisfied until I had divided it and taken by far the larger share. Her shining, expressive eyes reflected every joy she saw in mine, every cloud that crossed my face.

But her soft, full lips tightened with displeasure whenever I spoke to another woman; and she found out immediately that Winawa was her predecessor on my mat.

There was a silent, almost comic enmity between these two, and only their mutual respect for me prevented them from coming to blows. Winawa teased the younger woman by sitting, whenever possible, at my other side before the fire and pressing closely against me. When Ali pulled me away, Winawa made eyes at me, and emitted mysterious lip noises which Ali was sure possessed some erotic significance.

Ali kicked her legs in the air with anger; and

as a rule ended by jumping up and holding her hands over my eyes threatening to take Winawa's *mumut*, and get the witch-doctor to make her unfruitful, so that she would never be able to retain a husband, but live a "joyless widow" for the rest of her days.

When matters arrived at this stage, Winawa was usually frightened and declared a truce; for a few days she would be very careful to leave no trace of *mumut* anywhere in the neighbourhood of Ali, for fear the latter should find it and carry out her threat.

It was a constantly recurring source of sorrow to Ali that she was prohibited by her rank from taking part in certain of the common tasks; she was permitted to harvest the fruit, but might not dig or sow.

Neither might she take part in the great half-yearly *tatloi* [1] fishery.

When the presence of a shoal was signalled from the sentinels—who were placed in the tallest trees near the shore during the time when the fish were expected—we all charged down to the sea with baskets, sticks, and anything we could lay hands on.

[1] A small, bright fish like a sardine. It is the only fishery in which the women may take part.

Winawa invariably followed at my heels, right under Ali's nose, who could not join us.

We waded up to our knees in the water and formed a circle to prevent the tiny fish from escaping with the ebbing tide through the opening in the coral reef.

They shone and glittered, millions of them, leaping and dancing on the surface of the water. We held out our baskets and hands to frighten them back, slowly closing in the circle so that the shoal might become more closely packed, and thus more easily captured. At the turn of the tide the fish with one accord reversed their direction. The innumerable little bodies glittered in the sun as they leaped high in the air in their efforts to escape, only to be captured in the baskets, as we shoved them forward and scooped them up.

We became seized with frenzy. The filled baskets were quickly emptied by the boys into the canoes and handed back. Some caught them in their hands; others scooped them up in their arms; others again struck at the water with their sticks, so that the fish were stunned.

Several women, lacking baskets, tore off their skirts and used them as nets. I saw one possessing no equipment stuff fish into her belt, her hair, even in the spaces between her teeth, so that they

stuck out wriggling like snakes' tongues from her wide-open mouth.

We only desisted when the fish were a shoal no longer, but terrified, isolated atoms which fled in ones and twos between our knees. Then we waded to land, our arms aching, our feet cut and bruised from treading on the hard, rough coral.

Winawa came close to my side, with Kadu and Milawa on the other; they were all in excellent humour on account of the successful catch.

Winawa found among her fish two small pink *muamua*, resembling sea-slugs,[1] and offered me one of them. Kadu and the others began to grin meaningly, and watched eagerly to see whether I would accept Winawa's invitation.

I have tasted sea-slugs in Java, where, as in China, they are imported and sold as great delicacies. They are first boiled, then smoked, and finally served roasted; the natives, however, eat their *muamua* raw.

I looked at it for a few moments, then I persuaded myself to try it. At the same time Winawa swallowed hers, mumbling something to herself. Kadu, Milawa, and the rest, giggling and gesticulating, watched the little drama.

[1] *Trepang* sea-slugs (*bêche-de-mer*) are eaten everywhere in China, and in French farther India, also by Europeans.

As for Winawa, her whole face beamed, and she pressed affectionately against me, calling the others to witness my condescension.

"You saw him eat it?"

"We saw him eat it!" they replied in unison, obviously enjoying the situation, which to me, however, meant nothing at all.

That evening, as we sat round the fire with Ali as usual by my side, Winawa, who was sitting opposite us, said: "Brown Earth"—a nickname given me by Kadu—"has eaten *muamua* with me today."

"It's a lie!" shouted Ali, wildly excited, seizing my arm with both hands.

"You saw it, didn't you?" said Winawa in a drawling, affected voice, turning to Kadu and Milawa, at the same time swaying her body to and fro teasingly.

"Yes, we saw it!" the girls replied with one accord. "He took one and ate it, and she took the other and ate it."

"And he enjoyed it very much!" added Kadu, fixing his small, piercing eyes on Ali with an irritating smile.

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" screamed Ali in my face, pulling my arms to make me speak.

I could not understand in the least what all

the fuss was about. "Certainly I ate it; we all ate them!" I answered, freeing myself gently from her grasp.

Ali sprang back; her face contracted, and she flung herself on her back in the sand, where she lay kicking her legs and wailing at the top of her voice.

I jumped up and endeavoured to calm her; but it was impossible to learn my offence. She only kept shrieking: "She shall die, and you also! She shall die, and you also!"

At last Toko and I were compelled to carry her away behind the Common House, where the others could not hear or see us.

I petted her like a child; promised her the sun and the moon and all the necklaces to be found in the world; promised that the witch-doctor should cast the death-spell over Winawa; in short, all that she could possibly desire, until at last her frenzy changed to long, heartbroken sobbing.

I had seen Toko look doubtfully and disapprovingly at me during the telling of the story; I therefore used the temporary lull to interrogate him. He told me that *muamua*, like the real sea-slug, is regarded as a love charm. The woman who persuades a man to eat it with her, provided she at the same time recites an incanta-

tion, obtains complete power over his senses, and can prevent him from loving any one but herself.

I burst into loud laughter, which I soon found myself powerless to control. Ali raised herself on her hand and gazed at me in amazement. Accustomed as she was to identify herself with all my aims and emotions, she was at last compelled to laugh also, and I quickly seized the opportunity to persuade her that that kind of witchcraft had no power over me.

I was extremely careful not to refute its power over ordinary people—that would merely have upset her and made the natives suspicious of me; but against me, the white man, the island's evil spirits were utterly powerless. Not, however, until I told her that it was my gun which frightened them would she be calmed. That fear she could quite understand.

Nevertheless, Ali's peace of mind had received a shock. Even supposing that the evil spirits were powerless, there still remained Winawa's hatred. Ali understood perfectly well Winawa's refusal to give up trying to win me; what really surprised her was the fact that the other unmarried women did not all desert their men to run after me. When we were lying on our mat that night, she pressed her warm body close against

mine and whispered tearfully: "Why don't you buy me? Why don't you buy me?"

I lay awake for a long time thinking over her words, while Ali slept peacefully, her healthy, regular breathing warming my neck.

Some days later, when I returned from work in the fields, Ali was not to be found.

I asked the women where she had gone.

"She is in the Women's House," [1] they said.

Already, the very first day, I missed her frightfully; but the next day was worse still. I found that I could no longer live without her beating heart at my side, her ever-open hand touching mine, her steadfast eyes reflecting the light from my own, her young straight soul which, receiving everything from me, gave in return all she possessed.

I stole away from the others at midday whilst they lay dozing in the shade, and crept cautiously in the direction of the Women's House. I had never been there before; it was forbidden for men to approach on pain of being stoned to death by the women if discovered.

But I knew the general direction, having

[1] The Women's House is an isolated building situated in the midst of the woods. It is there that the young girls are prepared for their "initiation"; and where each woman retires for a day or so every few weeks when naturally indisposed.

several times seen women returning from the place, smiling and rejuvenated, wearing their new skirts. I looked about until I found a place at the edge of the forest where the aerial roots were broken and twigs snapped. I followed the faintly defined path cautiously, standing and listening at intervals; I knew the place could not be far distant, for the King's cocoa-nut grove was just over the hill.

Reaching the King's newly erected fence I turned at right angles and went straight ahead, until I heard some hens cackling. There it was! In a little clearing among the trees stood a big, square house resembling the Common House, with a high, painted gable. It was surrounded by a close bamboo fence about six feet high.

I could hear the women laughing and chattering within. I even thought I could distinguish Ali's voice, and creeping nearer I peeped through a hole in the fence.

There she was! She was walking in the sand, playing with the chickens, to which she threw crumbs of *taro* bread, trying to capture them as they picked them up.

I was as delighted as if we had been parted a whole month. When she at last came near the place where I stood, I began clucking like a hen.

She listened for a moment and then came right up to the hole in the fence, with the intention of looking through.

I spoke her name. She gave a violent start; her eyes shone like fire into mine. Recovering herself quickly she called to the hen. I clucked again louder and louder. She pretended to be surprised, and went up to two old women, whom I had never before set eyes on, and who probably lived there all their lives, occupied in watching the holy place.

She told them of the hen which had flown over the fence and escaped. One of the old women gave her a long stick with a hook at the end. She took it and approached the door, which was situated in the fence quite near where I was standing. She put the hook in a ring high up in the air and pulled downwards with all her might. The heavy door, hanging on a large wooden pulley, rose slowly in its tight-fitting grooves. Making the pole fast, she slid underneath the door, and next moment she was in my arms, all the while calling the hen, and I cackling in response!

Suddenly terror of the consequences overwhelmed her. She pressed her bosom once more against me, unloosed her arms from my shoulders,

and drove me away. She remained standing there, calling to the imaginary hen until I was in safety beyond the liana trees, and she could see me no more.

The dull thump of the heavy door falling into its place echoed in my ears as I once more joined the others, who lay as I had left them, sleeping in the shade of the trees.

That night, as I lay sleepless on my lonely mat, I determined to buy Ali.

First of all I must build a house. How could one buy a king's daughter without a house to offer her?

I began to throw out hints to Toko that I was not so young as he, and that Tongu, who was very little older than I, had been for a long time a bearded man with his own house and home. Toko looked at me with a scared expression. I went on to say how much easier it would be to have a house of one's own instead of sleeping where every one was sniffing and kicking and scraping with their mats.

Toko made no reply; he only frowned and looked dejectedly before him in silence.

On the third evening of Ali's absence, as we were walking home from the fields, I complained of pains in the back. I was not strong enough

to stand the continuous labour with the boiling sun on my back the whole day long. I was in better health at the beginning when I lived alone with Tongu.

This was too much for Toko.

"If you want to build a house and leave us," he said, with trembling voice, "then say it right out, but don't grumble at me, who eat from your hand." [1]

I suddenly realized that Toko thought me ungrateful. Everything I had said he had taken as a personal reproach, as if it were his fault that the sun burnt, and my back hurt, and people scraped their feet and shuffled their mats at night.

Finally I admitted to him that I wanted to buy Ali.

He shook his head despondently, and hinted that women never brought luck. One was never safe against witchcraft. It were far better to eat one's bread oneself than share it with others. It were better to live at peace with one's friends and choose one's own bedfellow than have the bird of ill-omen sitting on one's roof.

When he saw that his good advice fell on deaf ears he gave a deep sigh, and began at last to be interested in the matter itself. And when he

[1] The native expression for blind devotion and servitude.

really understood that a house must be built and that nobody must know why, he became almost more interested than I was myself.

He walked to and from his work with a vacant, far-away expression in his eyes. Upon my asking what he thought about, he no longer answered "Air," but "Fireplace" or "Flat bamboos for the walls" or something similar.

He was even more affectionate than usual towards me at this period; he thought only of making life happy for me, though he was convinced he would soon lose me for ever.

We found a suitable situation in the Common Wood not far from the sea, and quite close to the cocoa-nut grove. We cleared the ground. Tongu procured us good dry timber at a low cost; he was delighted with my plan, and looked forward with joy to my joining the bearded benedicts of the community, of which he had long been a valued member.

Toko cut down young branches for laths, and hastened to secure the best and largest cocoa-nut leaves for thatching. I marked off a rectangular piece of ground—it was to be a large hut, a royal hut for Ali.

After I had ransacked my sea-chest, thus pro-

viding the necessary funds, Toko and Tongu undertook in partnership the difficult task of choosing dry, well-seasoned, cocoa-nut beams, which were required for the chief uprights as well as for lateral and longitudinal foundations for the whole hut.

The walls were formed from young trunks split into thick boards, and covered on the innermost side with thin bamboo canes, like those in the King's House. Tongu found these an unnecessary luxury, but Toko was of the opinion that nothing was too good for me.

The fireplace was set on the central cross-beam formed of the usual large square coral blocks, chosen by Toko, and hewn into shape by the three of us. We covered the outer side of these blocks with thick planking, as used only in the best houses.

An enormous sleeping-bench filled one end of the room, constructed of first quality planks, carefully smoothed by Toko with his mussel hatchet. The bench was raised about a foot above the floor, and Tongu wove two beautiful mats for it, from the softest bass, procured from the ribs of the *pandang* leaf. They were his wedding gift.

In the opposite corner, just inside the door, was a wooden stand, corresponding to our hat-stand, for tools and weapons. Round the entire room, just underneath the roof, ran two deep shelves for food, kitchen utensils, and other articles in daily use.

The house, whitewashed on the outside with burnt coral chalk, with ochre-painted door and beams, and roofed with the finest interwoven cocoa-nut leaves, was finished at last. Tongu, Toko, and I made a final inspection both inside and out. When all was pronounced perfect, and we stood once more before the door, Toko suddenly burst out crying, tearing his curly hair.

"Now you are leaving me," he howled, "and I shall never see you again! Who will protect me against *mumut* and *purmea*?" [1]

I assured him that we should meet every day, and that he was always welcome at my house. But he only shook his head, and began his eternal wail about the bird of ill-omen on the roof.

I went to my sea-chest and found an old watch, which I taught him to wind up. I told him that the evil spirits were as much afraid of the watch as of my gun.

[1] Witchcraft.

This comforted him a little; but he continued depressed and gloomy. All his talk about evil spirits was probably a childish attempt to explain away the sorrow he felt at parting from me, an emotion he had never before experienced, and therefore could not comprehend.

CHAPTER TEN

ESCORTED by Tongu and Toko, I went to the King's House to ask for Ali's hand. We took gifts for Long White-Ears: a pair of yellow flannel pants with black stripes, and a pair of white silk braces with blue stitches. They had been my pride, when I bought them long ago in Batavia.

As we turned from the highway towards the royal residence, Wahuja, as before, came sneaking towards us. He seemed always to know beforehand what was happening in the village.

I could see by his very walk, as he came limping forward on his sore feet, his skinny knees knocking against one another, that he knew our errand, and its importance.

He was wearing my uncle's gold spectacles, which he always donned on important occasions, believing evidently that they not only sharpened his eyes, but also his wits.

He stopped a short distance away and beckoned us into the shadow of the *pisang* tree. His small

crafty eyes swept hastily over my person, my escort, and the basket Toko was carrying. His toothless gums worked ceaselessly; he elevated his hairy right ear as if he were giving audience. I told him my mission. But though he had from the beginning warmly applauded Ali's choice—besides receiving a drink as a perquisite on calling the day after—it was impossible now to wring from him one approving glance.

Quite the reverse. The cunning rat scratched his donkey's ears thoughtfully, as though he had a most criminal case to deal with.

"Has the Rich Giver considered," he said after a period of gum chewing, "the fact that he is a foreigner, and, in addition, possesses a false skin?"

I pointed out that I had only followed his own wise advice, and that my appearance was in consequence identical with that of every respectable Mahura man.

"But the King's daughter has real skin," he persisted—as if skin, not marriage, were being discussed. "It does not wash off in the rain!" he added viciously, as an afterthought.

I remarked that it was unfortunate that Wahuja did not approve of my plan, for otherwise I had brought one or two trifles I had intended to offer him as a reward for his incon-

venience in laying the matter before the King.

Toko opened the basket. The braces and trousers were produced. I held them up before his ancient eyes in all their tempting length. In spite of himself he could not conceal his desire for this new finery. His trembling fingers fumbled over the soft wool; his spectacles gleamed on the white silk, as he sniffed the braces from one end to the other.

Would not the wise Wahuja try what excellent protection they were for elderly legs needing warmth? (Wahuja always looked half-frozen.)

I drew him aside among the trees and showed him how to put them on. It was a difficult job, but we succeeded at last, Tongu and Toko lifting him up bodily while I stuck his stiff legs through.

He was tremendously impressed upon looking down and seeing his black-striped limbs. I then fastened the braces on and showed him the wonderful mechanism with the round flat buttons—he called them mussels—for fitting into the holes in the braces; when he saw that they could be lengthened or shortened so that the trousers could pull up right over his sunken stomach; when he noticed how the warmth began to tickle—his mouth opened silently almost to his hairy ears,

exposing his leathery, toothless gums. It was the first and only time I ever saw Wahuja laugh.

Tongu and Toko emitted one "Ai" after the other, standing bowed in respectful admiration, striking themselves awestruck blows on the thighs.

I then ventured a witticism.

"Now that the wise Wahuja himself wears a false skin, he cannot blame the foreigner for his skin not being real?"

Wahuja failed to appreciate my humour, and contented himself with remarking that he would do what he could for the Rich Giver. When we reached the last part of the road to the King's House—Wahuja wearing his gold spectacles, braces, and pants—the verandah literally seethed with curly black heads, overwhelmed with admiration at the unique spectacle. They disappeared abruptly at a word of command from within.

Wahuja made us wait beneath the verandah until he had shown off his finery to the King, and explained our business. There followed a long delay, probably occupied in settling details of the price, and in arraying His Majesty in reception clothes.

When at last we entered, Wahuja directed me to lead the way, with Tongu some paces behind,

while he ordered Toko to sit just outside the door.

"This will be an expensive business," I thought, "with all this ceremony."

We greeted the King obsequiously, as he sat on his mat in most solemn state—his little white parade ax over his shoulder and *betel*-basket on his arm. The straw hat, too, was on his head, while behind him stood a young girl holding the umbrella over his head in place of the usual fan.

He looked dignified and good-humoured, but not nearly so friendly as on the last occasion.

"This will be a terrible expense," I thought again; "the old hypocrite has put him up to it."

As before, the Queen sat on a separate mat slightly to the rear, but Wahuja was now right in the foreground—indeed, almost in front of the King. Obviously it was he who would conduct the negotiations.

After the King had offered us *betel*, and we had chewed and expectorated for the correct time, he said suddenly: "What does the Rich Giver desire of the King?"

"Rich Giver" and the use of the third person were very bad signs.

Phrasing my words carefully, I said that the poor stranger who ate from the King's hand on this happy island had presumed to fix his eyes

upon the King's daughter; and that he desired above all things to buy her as his wife, in order thereby to provide His Majesty with numerous descendants to perpetuate his most honourable lineage and be heavy tax-payers to the royal treasury.

I had rehearsed my speech on the previous evening before Tongu, who had approved of it all except that he advised the substitution of "tax-payers" for "warriors," the latter expression being, in his opinion, obsolete.

The King chewed awhile on his last piece of *betel*, afterwards spitting it out vigorously, making an excellent long-distance shot, which almost reached the opposite wall where Toko sat.

"Why do my people call the Foreigner 'Brown Earth'?" he said suddenly.

I gave Wahuja a look full of reproach for his ingratitude. But before I could answer the old man interrupted.

"The Foreigner painted his skin at my suggestion to avoid annoyance. And 'Brown Earth' has, by so adapting himself to our customs, derived power over this island's evil spirits, so that he and his are safe against witchcraft."

An extraordinary thing then happened. The Queen, who hitherto had remained silent and

motionless, staring at me, suddenly opened her bulging lips and exclaimed:

"When the King's daughter bears children to the Foreigner they will not have real skins, but false ones which will wash off in the rain, and the King's blood will be for ever shamed."

I had forgotten all about the Queen: now the fat was in the fire with a vengeance!

Tongu came to my assistance. Throwing himself forward on all fours, he said:

"If the Great King's daughter will but visit the witch-doctor when she is with child, and let him practise *purmea* on her body, her offspring will have real skin."

But the Queen countered like lightning: "Wahuja said that the spirits of this island had no power over the Rich Giver or his family."

Tongu gaped; he could not cap that. I cursed my forgetfulness; there was no mistaking what the Queen meant in calling me by my confounded nickname.

Wahuja again came to the rescue. Jealous of his power, he ignored the Queen completely, bent down before the King, and said:

"The Great King can instruct the Rich Giver to let his own spirits, who obey him and are

mightier than ours, furnish the offspring of the King's daughter with real skin."

I hastened to assure His Majesty that there was nothing the spirits of my race would like better than to take charge of his daughter's offspring. Then, bowing to the Queen, said:

"The Queen has made the Foreigner's eyes big with her beauty. Never was there anything so pretty as the ornament round her neck" (the silk handkerchief I had given her a few days ago, which was then tied with the ends hanging on her bosom), "but how glorious would not Her Majesty appear if she wore a similar ornament in her glossy hair, just like *Sha Quivin*"—here I pointed to the Madonna with the blue cloth round her head. "Such an ornament will the Foreigner present to the Great King's beautiful Queen. In addition, he will give her a new skin for her hands similar to the one worn by the wise Wahuja on his legs; but that skin shall be whiter than the whitest coral sand on the shore."

(My old white dancing-gloves should be just about her size.)

The Queen raised her lazy eyelids, her eyes bulged, and her mouth opened wide, showing all her brown teeth. Victory was ours. The King

relaxed ceremony and began to look friendly. He made a fresh *betel*-plug for me and took one himself; again we chewed and spat for some time without speaking.

Then he said—dropping my tiresome titles and speaking most familiarly: "Have you had my daughter on your mat?"

I answered in the affirmative, although it was a mere matter of form, he having known it from the beginning.

"And you are sure that you and my daughter are suited to one another?"

By which he meant that once the bargain was struck, it would be useless for me to come to him afterwards complaining of hidden faults and wanting my money back.

I again acquiesced, at the same time repressing all signs of enthusiasm, for fear of inflating the price.

Had I a suitable house for her?

He knew all about it, cunning old rascal! For the last fortnight the village had talked of nothing else but the new house and its magnificence.

Tired of beating about the bush, I ventured to ask in level tones what was the price demanded for Ali.

The King immediately resumed his dignity; while Wahuja slid forward on his mat until he sat between the King and me.

"The King's youngest daughter," he croaked, "is valued at a hundred *pokon tabu*." [1]

Good heavens!

There followed a dead silence, while I collected my thoughts. I could see their eyes fixed on me in great excitement, although their faces remained quite expressionless.

Tongu dared not say a word, but I knew that he also found the price extortionate. At last I summoned up courage and spoke:

"The King's daughter is very beautiful; she is worth more than five white women. But for a hundred *pokon* the Foreigner could buy twenty women of his own race. Therefore, O wise Wahuja, he who came to this island as the Rich Giver, but who now, on account of his gifts, has become the Poor Giver, can offer only fifty *pokon* for the King's youngest daughter."

[1] *Tabu* means money, fortune, property. The unit of value is a small shell in which is bored a hole so that it can be strung on a *rotang* thread. A string reaching from the middle of the chest to the tips of the fingers holds 160 shells and is called a *papar*. Two *papar* are called a *pokon* and consist, therefore, of 320 units.

A painful silence followed, broken only by Wahuja's gums rubbing together as he prepared his reply.

But the King, losing patience, anticipated him:

"I have heard that you possess a gun-stick only half the length of the ordinary one."

He referred to my pistol. I was struck dumb with amazement. I had never once used the pistol on the island; it had remained undisturbed in my sea-chest. I don't believe that even Tongu knew of its existence.

So they had managed to spy out my buying capacity! I looked hard at Wahuja, but he did not blink; I looked at Tongu—he seemed to be equally guiltless.

After another awkward pause Wahuja decided to launch an ultimatum.

"If the White Man will give the Great King his little fire-stick, the King will sell his daughter for fifty *pokon*."

I beat him down to forty *pokon*, in consideration of the little fire-stick being unique in its rarity.

Before the matter was finally settled Wahuja modestly suggested to His Majesty that two *pokon* be granted him out of the Foreigner's pocket as a kind of commission. This was too

much for the Queen, who raised her voice again, exclaiming that, as I had no parents, and Tongu lived alone in his house, it was best that Ali should pass her isolation period[1] in the King's House, where she—the Queen—would watch over her personally, for which service she would require a bonus of two *pokon*, also to be paid by me.

Thus at last the bargain was concluded.

The King could not conceal his joy; the Queen also bubbled with anticipation; while Wahuja crept about chewing his gums over the good stroke of business he had done.

We over-ate ourselves most grossly at dinner, to which both Wahuja and Tongu were invited, as a mark of appreciation for services rendered.

We became very merry, shouting and competing with one another in hiccoughing and other primitive noises, while the King threw dignity to the winds and kicked me repeatedly on the shins.

When, sick with food and dizzy with new fer-

[1] When a young girl is sold, she lives in the house of her parents-in-law until the price is paid and the wedding may take place. She is shut off in a separate room, may see no one, and only eat certain articles of food. When necessary for her to go out of doors, she wears a nun's dress of *pandang* leaves which covers her from the crown of her head to her feet. The woman taking charge of her is responsible for her condition, and receives gifts at her wedding.

mented wine, we finally departed, Wahuja accompanied us with ostentatious friendliness.

I asked him how soon the marriage could take place, to which he made the business-like rejoinder that as soon as I had paid the money I could have the bride.

We were saying good-bye to the wise man down by the beach, when Tongu remarked he had something on his mind, and hastened to call me back.

Wahuja hesitated a moment, fidgeting on his sore feet. Then out it came.

Could I raise so big a sum of money? Forty-four *pokon* was a big, very big *tabu*. If, however, I should be unable for the time being to pay, he would be only too pleased to assist me. He had several good friends who had *tabu* in reserve, and, if I cared to borrow the amount, he could arrange the matter at an interest of one *pokon* for every five as borrowed.

That was twenty per cent.! I agreed to borrow half the money, for I immediately realized that it was part of the purchase-price. If I refused his help he would certainly discover a fresh moral objection to the marriage.

Before letting me escape, he made one more offer. If I wished to raise the remaining half of the money by selling the contents of my sea-chest,

he knew persons willing to pay high prices if necessary.

I replied that I would think it over, and thanked him for his kindness and interest.

Then at last we parted, the best of friends, every trace of condescension on Wahuja's part gone. Never had I seen the old man so overjoyed as he limped away on his sore feet, with his white silk braces and the striped flannel pants, that covered his skinny body to the shoulder-blades.

But no sooner was he out of earshot than Tongu burst into loud complaints.

We could easily have bought the girl for half the money—the King's expression told him that. I should never have offered fifty *pokon*, but should have said that there were plenty more pretty girls on this happy island. With the fire-stick thrown in, twenty *pokon* would have been an excellent price.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A MONTH later we all assembled at the King's House, Tongu and Toko bearing the purchase-money in their baskets. We were received ceremoniously by Wahuja, in the presence of the King and the whole Court.

When the time arrived for the money to be counted, Wahuja beckoned the tallest man in the King's bodyguard to come forward. The fellow was well over six feet high, and as he proceeded to measure our *papar* [1] chains from the middle of his chest to the tips of his fingers, it soon became evident that our *tabu*, to fulfil the conditions, would need increasing by one-fifth.

This was too much for Tongu. He sprang forward, and with bulging eyes declared that we would not submit to the longest-armed Master of the Mint in the whole kingdom.

Wahuja calmly replied that that was *his* business.

Tongu, who was extremely honourable and

[1] See note, p. 135.

punctilious in money matters, answered hotly—I had never seen the sedate old fellow so angry. They would certainly have come to blows had not the King majestically declared himself content with the measure we had employed, which corresponded exactly to Tongu's width of breast and length of arm.

When the question of money was at last settled, the Queen appeared, escorting Ali into the room. She was covered from head to foot with a robe of *pandang* leaves, so that she had to be led forward by the hand.

As soon as her nun's dress had been removed and, for the first time after a month's separation, she caught sight of me, she uttered a shriek of joy and ran towards me without the least regard for etiquette.

His Majesty murmured, and Ali had to return to the Queen until we men had chewed *betel* to seal the bargain. The King offered to give a feast-dance in my honour, but I excused myself, as I saw how impatient Ali was; Wahuja also was of the opinion that a breach of marriage etiquette was permissible on account of my not being a real Mahura man.

I now presented to the Queen the promised handkerchief and white gloves, together with the

bonus agreed upon. At last Ali was mine in real and lawful marriage.

Then I took Ali home.

Her bridal costume consisted of fresh-plucked red flowers in her hair and ears, and round her neck. In addition, her whole body shone regally with thick cocoa-nut oil, while her breast and arms were painted with flaming streaks of yellow.

When Ali saw her new home she leaped high in the air with a shriek of delight, and began immediately to explore the interior. When she had finished she came up to me, put her arms round my body, and looked up in my face, her whole soul shining in her large, clear eyes.

When we at last retired to rest on our new mat, her tears and smiles mingled as she clung to that which was now her whole world. She called me by the most extraordinary names—fish, fowl, and other things I could not understand. Her joy degenerated into inarticulate noises, but when at last she became quieter she told me to the minutest detail all the sorrow and anxiety she had suffered through being separated from me.

We were incredibly happy, we two—we two quite alone. In the morning we jumped out of

bed like two happy, intoxicated birds, our voices bursting with song.

We warbled in the blazing morning sun, and in the beginning did not even trouble to leave our nests to run down to the strand to bathe.

We sat like two children, lazily watching the hens scratching at the roots of the trees, laughing at the young cockerels learning to flap their wings and crow.

Presently Ali would make a fire in the fireplace, choose the best *taro* bulbs from our food cupboard, wrap them carefully in fresh leaves, and place them on the red-hot stones. When they were properly roasted she would take them out and give them to me, tastefully served on a *pisang* leaf, together with a shell full of the milk of young cocoa-nuts.

At first nothing would induce her to eat with me; she would squat down before me, enjoying every mouthful of bread I took, her eyes reflecting my glance, her face reproducing each expression of my own.

She always drew back shyly whenever I tried to make her join me. She loved me too well to dishonour me by letting a woman eat in my presence—and this although we were quite alone.

After a struggle lasting for weeks, I persuaded her to break this rule; but even then she acquiesced only from necessity, and was never sure but that by so doing she might be causing me some secret harm.

Together we enlarged our garden, together we planted *taro* bulbs, kneeling with our backs to the sun, sharing every labour, every pleasure.

As we worked thus, day after day, she opened her whole mind to me.

"Do you know where the *taro* bulb came from?" she asked.

I did not know.

"There sat an owl in a crevice high above the ground. It sat there lonely and silent, looking very depressed. The other birds came flying round it trying to make it laugh; but it could not. The crow made itself black, the honey bird turned red, and the dove put a bump on its nose; but to no effect.

"At last came a little green parrot. It ducked itself in the mud under the mangroves, and then flew up and sat on the branch before the owl, flapping its wings so that the mud spurted in all directions.

"That made the owl laugh at last. It opened its beak and laughed. In so doing it dropped

something out of its nose. The parrot seized it and swallowed it.

"The parrot flew away; and shortly afterwards dropped something on the ground. Among it was that which the owl had dropped from its nose. It took root; a little plant grew up; men found it. It was the *taro* plant!"

One day, at sunset, as we lay outside our cottage, weary and well fed, gazing up at the tall trees of the King's cocoa-nut grove, which adjoined our farm, she asked: "Do you know how men found the cocoa-nut palm?"

I did not know.

"There was once a man, and his wife bore him a son. When he was big, she sent him out with his sling to kill a pigeon. He laughed with joy, took his canoe, and paddled with his hands —for at that time there were no paddles—over to a small island where the pigeons were. But on the way a shark caught him and swallowed both him and his canoe. The man and his wife wept and cried the whole night—but their son did not return. But the shark had only eaten the boy's body, not his head. And one day it was washed up on the shore, where the father found it and buried it. But the mother sat all day and all night by the grave, crying and tearing

her hair; and her tears fell on the grave, until at last there grew up out of the earth a tiny plant. When the man and his wife saw it, they carefully scraped the earth to one side, and now they could see quite plainly the eyes, nose, and mouth of the boy's head; it had taken root in the earth.

"Then said the mother: 'Let it grow; we will see what it becomes!'

"And the plant became a tall tree which bore fruit.

"One day a ripe fruit fell down. Although it was as hard as a man's skull they broke it open and ate the contents. One fruit after another fell down, and they all tasted good.

"Thus a good youth gave the cocoa-nut tree to mankind."

One day we both captured one of the little turtles that lay basking in the sun. While we were carrying it home she asked: "Do you know why its shell is too short at the neck?"

I did not know.

"There was an animal with long hind legs and short forepaws.[1] It was a large animal, and could jump a long, long way. There are none upon the islands now. But before this story

[1] Probably the kangaroo, which is now extinct on these Islands.

happened its forepaws were the same length as its hind legs. One day Longlegs went fishing out by the reef, together with his comrades. Then came the high tide, and the others hurried back. But this one remained: he was foolhardy, and jumped from rock to rock, making fun of the fish as they came swimming in with the tide. He did not notice until too late that he was quite surrounded by the water and could not come back to land. Then he wept and begged the fish to carry him in; but they replied: 'You mocked us before; now you can help yourself!'

"At last a good-natured turtle took Longlegs upon its back and carried him to land. But on the way Longlegs gnawed at the turtle's shell just by the neck. The turtle became angry, and in revenge nibbled at the other's forepaws, which were clasped round the turtle's neck, until at last they became quite short.

"When they reached the land, Longlegs jumped off and said: 'Just look at your neck, Turtle, how bare and uneven it has become!' But the tortoise replied: 'Just look at your forepaws, Longlegs, how short they have become!'

"And that's how it all came about!"

Ali looked gravely at me with her large eyes when the story was finished, and frowned because

I found it impossible to stop laughing.

One day Ali came and put a string round my neck which she had made from cocoa-nut fibre. It was smeared with lime, and had an unpleasant smell.

"What's that for?"

"That is a charm against illness! I have taken it to the witch-doctor; he has stroked it and read words over it."

I had not the heart to take the string off when I saw what a feeling of gladness and security it gave her. Ali objected to my spitting when any one else was present. She was always trying to impress upon me to be careful about *mumut*, so that no one should find anything to throw a spell over.

Whenever we sat outside our cottage at sunset, and the sudden darkness fell upon us, her eyes grew frightened and she pulled me by my arm into the cottage. When we lay at night upon our mat, and I got up to fetch anything I had forgotten outside our bamboo fence, she seized my arm and begged me with sobs not to go out into the night. If I didn't give way she always went out with me, holding tightly to my arm the whole time, so that if one of the wicked dead men's spirits—which dwell by day either in the

breakers on the reef or among the bottomless mangrove swamps, but by night creep round about the houses seeking to ensnare people and make them ill—should succeed in laying hold of me, she also would be bewitched, and suffer with me.

There are two different kinds of spirits, so Ali has taught me. There are the spirits of the Great Kings, who, coming over the sea from the West, were the first to discover the island, take possession of it and cultivate the land. They are good spirits; and it is their house which stands by itself behind the King's House, and is the abode of the witch-doctor, who attends to them and fills their bowls with food, in return for which they hear his prayers and direct his movements accordingly.

The witch-doctor is also in touch with nature's elemental spirits, some of which are good, some evil.

One of them lives in the moon; you can see him sitting up there plaiting strings of cocoa-nut fibre. Another lives in the evening star, where he brews bad weather. But the one that lives in the morning star makes good weather and causes the sun to shine.

The Milky Way is also full of spirits, good

and evil. At intervals they rush down and fetch a human being they have chosen for sacrifice. Some spirits live in birds, others in fish or trees. Some of them are visible to human eyes: Ali once saw one sitting on the beach warming itself in the sun. It had hair all over its body.

"There is so much, so much to beware of!" sighed Ali, looking round helplessly with anxious eyes. "At any moment an evil spirit may be lying in wait for you."

I sometimes tried seriously to reason her out of these unhappy superstitions, as on that evening when I succeeded in quieting her and Toko with regard to the sea-slug witchcraft—but she immediately became shy; looked in a puzzled and depressed manner at me, and retired into her shell, feeling intuitively for a moment the great dissimilarity in our natures.

I ceased to argue the matter, merely assuring her that at any rate she need not worry on my behalf.

But she did. And, after all, who really knows what does and what does not exist in this world?

On one occasion I had an attack of fever. I shivered with cold. Everything swam before my eyes. I was compelled to go to bed, covered with

all the clothes and blankets I could find in my sea-chest.

Ali sat by my side with wide, terror-stricken eyes, which I was conscious of even in my delirium. Her expression during those days I have never forgotten.

I gave her my hot hands to hold; I could feel how she shivered in sympathy with me, while she gurgled in her throat with fear and excitement.

She talked of spirits and the witch-doctor. I knew that all the while she was trying to think of an antidote to the spell which she was convinced some woman or other had cast over me.

Finally I sent her to fetch Tongu, so that he could search in my sea-chest for some quinine, the use of which he understood from his residence on Yap, where there is a quinine factory.

She rose immediately, but stood for a long while hesitating before she dared release my hands. Finally she pressed them convulsively to her breast and hurried away.

I don't know how long I was alone. Suddenly I heard subdued voices outside, and the door opened to admit a tall, doubled-up, emaciated figure which noiselessly approached my mat, Ali

remaining in the background with large, frightened eyes.

I had never seen the man before. As he bent over me I observed that two turtle-shell plates hung tinkling from holes in his nostrils, while his long black beard, arranged in three plaits, reached down to his stomach.

He commenced mumbling, his face so close to mine that I could feel his breath. Faster and faster he mumbled, at the same time fanning my face in time with his words.

He put his hand on my forehead and combed my cheeks with his long fingers; but I was too weak to make any resistance whatever. Then he squatted at my side and produced from his basket one extraordinary article after another. A pungent smell filled the air; I believe it was ginger. In addition, there was *betel*, and various dried herbs and leaves which I did not recognize. He took each thing separately and chewed it to a pulp, afterwards chewing the whole lot together. He then spat the resulting cud out into a cocoanut shell, sprinkled it with burnt lime, and stirred it well together. This remarkable preparation he proceeded to smear on my chest and arms, afterwards kneading it in thoroughly, all the while

mumbling over me, in tones which constantly varied in speed and power.

I remember no more; but when I woke, many hours afterwards, the fever was gone, though I was so limp and weak that I could scarcely lift my hand.

Ali crouched beside me, her eyes burning into mine. I do not think she left me for a moment during all those endless hours.

When I opened my eyes and looked at her she uttered a scream of joy and threw herself upon my breast, long, heartbreaking sobs shaking her young, strong body.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ONE morning when I awoke Ali was sitting up on the mat, her head on her knees, crying as if her heart would break, her whole frame quivering with emotion.

I raised her head gently and, taking her hands from her face, asked what the trouble was.

"I dreamed that I was a 'joyless widow'!" Having said this, she flung herself upon me, and literally howled.

On the previous day we had met one of these women, Ikala by name, a tall, dark personage with large shells in her ears and a brilliantly coloured skirt. She walked by herself, swaying on her wide, full hips, singing a low, monotonous song without moving her thick, half-parted lips. As she passed, her eyes glanced at me from under their heavy lids with a strangely quiet, seductive stare. At sight of Ali she smiled slightly, a touch of contempt in the corners of her wide mouth.

Slight as it was, Ali noticed the smile, and was silent long afterwards. It made a deep impres-

sion upon her—and now she had also dreamt about it.

I did my best to comfort her, but her mind was so positive and straightforward that she was very difficult to influence.

"Why trouble about a silly dream? Why should you become a joyless widow?"

She lifted her head, the blood flaming to her large tear-filled eyes, and answered:

"I go to the Women's House today!"

Ali had been there twice since our marriage, and she had passed the last few days in a state of quivering suspense because of her third visit being delayed. But now she knew that her hopes were vain, and that she must go there again.

"Ikala has looked at me!"[1] she screamed, wildly tearing her hair.

I laughed loudly, sang at the top of my voice, and kicked my legs. But she ignored my attempts to divert her.

"Didn't you see how she stared at me and smiled?" she demanded, shaking me passionately by the arm.

"She looked at me too!"

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, "she has also

[1] *i.e.* cast a spell.

bewitched you. For if you had had a child, then I must have had it too!"

Failing to bring her to reason, I got up, left the cottage, and walked towards the stockade-gate.

"Where are you going?" she cried, stretching out her arms in terror.

"Down to the beach for a swim!" I replied.

"Don't leave me!" she pleaded, running and seizing me tightly round the body with her arms.

"All right, only you must be quiet and sensible."

She gazed at me for some moments in silent anguish; then she dried her eyes, and began quietly making preparations for breakfast. Shortly afterwards she came to the door and, looking anxiously about to make sure I was still there, asked: "How will you manage when I go to the Women's House?"

"I managed all right the other times!" I said, laughing. "If there is any difficulty, Toko will come and help."

She looked piercingly at me and said in a low voice:

"Have you prayed to your spirits that I may have a child?"

"Not yet, but I will some time. There is no hurry!"

She looked at me in astonishment.

"No hurry?" she asked uncomprehendingly. I drew her to me and patted her cheek gently.

"Would it be such a terrible thing if we never had a child at all?"

She gave a violent start, and her eyes flamed again as she clutched my arm, ejaculating chokingly: "You must be tired of me, to say such a thing!"

I put my arm round her waist and looked steadily into her eyes, until she understood that I loved her now, as I had always loved her. Nevertheless, she sighed deeply and repeated several times: "Of what use to you is a childless woman?"

When I held her tightly to me without speaking, she continued: "Ought you to pay a big, big *tabu* for a woman who does not give you children?"

She threw back her head and, looking before her with a hard, almost cruel expression on her face, said in a changed voice: "When a woman is childless her husband tells her to leave him!" Suiting her actions to her words, she repulsed me

with her palms against my breast. "I bought you to breed children of my blood for my old age and for my race. Go back to your father and tell him that I will have my *tabu* returned. Then I will send him back his daughter that he may sell her to another, for she will give me no children!"

"And what then?" I demanded.

"Then she returns to her father," Ali continued in a more normal voice. " 'What do you want?' asks her father. 'I have not given my husband children,' she replies, 'and he has sent me back!' 'You wicked woman!' says her father, and gives her a thrashing, and no food for several days; and pays the *tabu* back. Then he seeks a new buyer; but no one will buy a barren woman. She sits alone before her father's hut, weaving mats and weeping; but no husband comes."

"And what more?" I persisted, stifling her sobs by pressing her affectionately to me.

" 'Go out on the road,' says her father, 'joyless widow without fruit! Go out and do tricks for the old men!' "

"Then she goes out on the road and sneaks about the huts; and when she meets a lonely man, whose mate is at the Women's House, she beckons to him, and coaxes him till he follows her to her

hut. And he gives her a little *tabu* which she gives to her father as part of the big *tabu* she has caused him to lose. She goes about accosting old men as they lie warming their limbs in the midday sun; she rouses their desires—pale, feeble ghosts of their youthful passions. Thus she goes from door to door, from mat to mat, until at last she pays back her father's *tabu*."

So saying, Ali threw herself face downwards on the ground, sobbing as though her heart would break. "I will not be a joyless widow!" she cried.

I lifted her up, calling her by every term of endearment that I knew—her favourite birds, her best flowers. "I will never send you away, Ali!"

But she looked straight at me, with an almost cruel expression, and answered harshly: "Are you, who are so great and good, to remain childless for a woman's sake? Your blood shall live again in your children; children shall brighten your old age. You must kill me if I have no child."

She threw herself upon me and made me promise to kill her if she gave me no children. Rather death a hundred times than be a joyless widow!

I was compelled to promise before she would give me any peace.

Then I accompanied her to the outskirts of the wood, which was as far as I was allowed to go. We said good-bye as if for ever; I stood looking after her until the liana trees swallowed her up. She did not once look back.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ONE day during Ali's stay at the Women's House I was lying down in the shadow of the house dozing after dinner. Suddenly something rattled outside the bamboo stockade. I looked up, but the noise ceased. Presently it came again, and I sprang to the door and looked out.

At first I could see nothing, but a moment later Winawa appeared. She smiled at me and came nearer, swaying in her peculiar, indolent manner, as though her body were too heavy for her hips. When quite close, she stopped, and stood looking sideways at me with those extraordinary eyes of hers, that seemed to vibrate in time with her pulse.

Upon my nodding to her she came right up to me and stretched out her hand. Her lips turned bluish, and her eyes translucent—which was her way of blushing; then she showed me what was in her hand.

It was a piece of *kawa*-root.

"Shall I chew it for you?" she asked, casting down her eyes, just as she did the time before in the fields with the others.

Winawa no longer attracted me. Since marrying Ali, I had no eyes for other women.

I suspected Winawa of being jealous of Ali's happiness, and therefore desirous of tempting me again; for Toko was perfectly content with her, which he would not have been if she were really in love with me. But she was of an envious disposition, in spite of her beauty.

I snatched the *kawa*-root from her and flung it far away among the trees.

Winawa's whole manner changed immediately: she drew herself to her full height, her hands clenched, her lips tightened in a thin, straight line. For a moment she remained thus; then gliding past me in a half-circle, her eyes fixed on mine, she hissed, with a poisonous smile: "I have practised *purmea* over your wife, so that she shall bear you no children!"

So saying she ran off at full speed through the brushwood, and disappeared from sight.

Her words pierced my heart, as they were meant to; but, annoyed at my own stupidity, I quickly dismissed the matter from my mind.

The next day Ali returned. When I heard her

call from afar in her clear, musical voice, I ran forward as fast as I could through the tangled undergrowth.

Soon I saw her. She stretched out both arms towards me, throwing back her head, her hair in a halo, her whole face beaming with smiles.

"You are good!" she shouted. It was her usual love-call.

I rushed up to her and lifted her off her feet; she clung convulsively to me, laughing and crying brokenly in her throat. . . .

Presently she made a hurried tour of the house and yard to see how I had managed without her. She chattered incessantly, raining questions upon me. She called to the hens, gave them *taro* crumbs, and declared that the chickens had grown. She stood with her arms akimbo and shrieked with laughter when she found that I had scraped toasted *taro* bulbs with my ax, instead of with the cocoa-nut-shell scraper which I could not find. She frowned disapprovingly because I had left some gnawed chicken bones lying on the leaf I used for a plate. That was careless, for it was *mumut*. She insisted on my helping her to count the bones to see whether any of them had been stolen by some one desiring to practise *purmea* upon them.

As the magic word passed her lips she became suddenly serious. She turned from the food-shelves, seized my arm, and told me how, when she arrived at the Women's House, she met Winawa, who was just leaving.

They came face to face just outside the door. Ali, ashamed of still being a visitor to the Women's House after three full months of married life, tried to hide behind some other women who were entering, and thus sneak past Winawa unobserved. But the latter had already seen her. "Ai!" she shouted, "there is the Brown Earth's woman. She has been married for more than three new moons, and yet comes here still. What is the matter with you? Has the Brown Earth already deserted you for another, or has some one practised *purmea* upon your body?"

Ali restrained herself, and walked past her rival without speaking. At this Winawa shouted: "Look at the withered leaf; how proud she is! But it is I who found her *mumut*, and now she is barren as a stone!"

Ali shrieked, and would have attacked her, but she was already gone. Only her pealing laughter filled the air.

Now I understood why Winawa had come to my cottage. I was very glad indeed that I had

repulsed her. But I did not consider it wise to tell Ali of her visit.

. . . . . .

Ali gave me no peace until I promised to take her to the witch-doctor, Kabua-Kenka, the guardian of the House of the Spirits, situated beyond the King's cocoa-nut grove.

One morning early she put on a new, plaited loin-skirt, thrust fresh-plucked flowers in her hair and ears, and smeared herself carefully with cocoa-nut oil on hair, arms, and breasts.

It is not seemly to visit the witch-doctor save in gala dress. Otherwise the forefathers' spirits, with whom he associates, and who eat from his hand, might take offence, and refuse their help.

I had to have an extra coat of colouring lest the spirits should discover my foreign skin and perhaps be frightened away. One never knew in what kind of mood they might be.

Ali impressed upon me that, in the event of the spell being a failure, we should later on blame ourselves severely for having neglected some point of etiquette, thus necessitating a repetition of the whole ceremony.

The witch-doctor is very expensive. In addition, he must be paid in advance and does not guarantee results. If the spell is a failure it is

obviously the customer's own fault; perhaps he has, in entering the hut, put his right foot foremost instead of his left; or perhaps he has been grudging in his offering to the spirits' food-bowl.

No breakfast was permitted. It is necessary to fast that the spell may work properly. Ali did not leave me alone for one instant, fearing that I would snatch a stolen mouthful of something or other. She was aware of my reckless agnosticism.

My assurance of a sleepless night, spent in ceaseless communion with the spirits of my own race, did not shake her one atom. She was glad and thankful for it, but insisted that as it was she who should bear the child, it must therefore be the business of her spirits to look after the matter; otherwise, perhaps I would have a child but not she. Especially now that Winawa's evil spell must be exorcized.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ALI was very serious when we set out, each carrying a basket filled with gifts and *tabu*. There was food for the spirits' eating-bowl: four freshly killed young hens, eight flying-fish, and a quantity of the best cocoa-nuts obtainable; in addition, two *pokon tabu*, which Tongu had paid me for painting his canoe with European designs, far superior to any native workmanship.

All the way along the fence enclosing the King's cocoa-nut grove, Ali maintained a dead silence; when we reached the path which leads through the woods to the House of the Spirits she began to tremble violently; but when we at last stood before the door of the dirty, insignificant building, her teeth chattered with terror and suspense. Her future happiness, nay, her very life, hung in the balance!

The witch-doctor is a much-feared man; women make a big detour when they see him approach, carrying his fan, his arm-basket, and his

folded mat, the emblems of his profession; while children scream and run like frightened chickens the moment they set eyes on his long, plaited beard.

I had to shout Kabua-Kenka's name three times before he at last appeared in the doorway, gnawing a *taro*-root, the turtle-shell plates in his nose clashing and jingling against one another. I recognized at once the doubled-up, emaciated old man with sunken temples and white hair who had visited me during my illness.

He cast a keen, suspicious look at me, as if wondering whether or not to believe the gossip which he had doubtless heard about me. His filthy fingers fumbled with his beard, but Ali, sensing his distrust, hastened to assure him that I was a good man, who had come with offerings for the spirits.

She emphasized her words by opening the basket and displaying to the holy man the delicious young hens and the fresh flying-fish. The old man smacked his lips loudly, and without a word stood aside, giving us entry into the sanctuary.

It stank of the most incredible contents, so that I almost swooned: a pig grunted softly some-

where behind a hung-up mat, a rat poked its nose through a hole in the bamboo wall, where it stared at us for some moments with the same suspicious expression as its master, before condescending to retire from view.

After a while, having become more accustomed to the atmospheric conditions, I began looking about me. From the low ceiling hung row after row of strange plants and herbs, among which I recognized the *betel*-leaf and ginger root; also numerous small pieces of bark dangled from *rotang* strings, as well as dried flowers, among them the hibiscus and many others I did not know. The latter were evidently the source of the multitudinous spiced odours which filled the air, mingling with a rotten, sickly smell emanating from some large bowls hollowed out of wood, which were placed near some carved blocks whose significance I did not grasp, until I suddenly caught sight of something resembling a nose, together with curvings of arms and legs.

They were the images of the Great Kings, four of them, standing in a row round the walls, each with his wooden bowl by his side, silent and motionless, caked with the dirt of countless years.

Two of the bowls were empty, but the other

two spirits had been less ravenous, broken remains of *taro* bread, fish, and fermenting bananas lying neglected and uneaten.

Ali, ignoring me completely, threw herself down on her hands before the largest image and began mumbling in a low voice. Then she emptied the contents of the baskets into the wooden bowls, putting an equal share in each. Now I understood why exactly four of our young hens were cut off in the flower of their youth: each of the Great Kings' spirits must receive one, in order that none should feel slighted, and so oppose our desires.

In the meanwhile, the old man had squatted on his mat, where he kept a sharp eye upon the offerings. When Ali had finished she threw an anxious glance at his face; and, observing a satisfied gleam in his small, piercing eyes, she jumped to her feet with a smile of relief, and nudged me with her elbow.

Then, according to agreement, I made a speech: I had come with my wife to the Great Kings' distinguished priest and wizard to beseech him, by means of the witchcraft and formulæ taught him by his father,[1] to cast a spell over her body that she might bear me a child, preferably a son. The

[1] The office is hereditary.

cause of my wife's sterility was this: that another woman had cast a spell over her, so that, although already married for more than three new moons, she was not yet with child.

"That will be two *pokon!*" said the old man in a business-like voice, holding out his hand.

Ali had evidently ascertained the price, for that was the exact sum we had brought with us. I measured the money out to him; he held the strings close to his eyes, running the smooth shells through his dry, stiff fingers, and depositing them finally in a basket at his feet.

As I had expected, he now made a sign to me to leave the hut, but I had made up my mind beforehand to be present at the ceremony. Granted that Ali was thoroughly trustworthy and Kabua-Kenka old, ugly, dirty and repulsive, judged even by native standards, one could not nevertheless know what it might occur to him to suggest to the girl, who, for her part, would certainly agree blindly to whatever the witch-doctor stated that the spirits demanded.

Instead of going, therefore, I calmly squatted on the floor by the door, and began to make a *betel* quid.

The old man was thunderstruck, and Ali—despite her dread of being left alone with him

—frowned at my disobedience. When, however, I remained where I was, looking as though nothing could be wrong, a faint smile of understanding slid over the old thief's countenance.

He took a mat down from a beam in the roof, cleared with his feet a space on the filthy floor, spread the mat out, and with a wave of the hand invited Ali to lie at full length on her back.

Next he lifted one of the wooden spirits, whose male sex was indicated in an unmistakable manner, and placed it at the foot of the mat, while another one, obviously a female, was placed at Ali's head.

The girl's whole body shook with fear. Her terror-stricken eyes sought mine, seeming to say that she could already feel that the spirits had taken possession of her from head to foot.

Kabua-Kenka suddenly shook off his lethargy; with a speed of which I imagined his stiff joints incapable he cut triangles in three or four of the cocoa-nuts we had brought. Whispering incomprehensible magic words, he poured some of the milk over the heads of the two gods, drank some himself, and poured a little down Ali's throat, causing her to choke and double up before she succeeded in swallowing it.

Having done this, he put the rest of the milk

in a bowl which he took from a shelf, at the same time picking some of the leaves and herbs hanging from the roof. Thrusting them in his mouth, he chewed them rapidly, without, however, for a moment ceasing his mumbling incantation. He then put the bowl between his knees; and after breaking pieces of a dried root into it, he grated some cocoa-nut over them with a large, rough stone, finally taking the rotting banana left by one of the gods, mumbling over it, and twisting it rapidly under his nose until his eyes started from his head, dull and lifeless, resembling balls of lead. When he had finished chewing the leaves and herbs he spat them out into the bowl, which was now filled with a sloppy, dark brown mixture, from which ascended such a revolting stench that all other smells in the fœtid chamber shrank into insignificance.

Overcome with nausea and disgust, I was about to spring forward and interfere, when my glance fell on Ali.

She lay there with her mouth wide open, her eyes shut, arms and legs outstretched, as lifeless as a stone. Only a slight movement of her breast showed that she still lived. I sank back breathless and frightened, impressed against my will by her mysterious sleep.

Without for one moment ceasing his mumbling, which rose and fell in regular cadence like a snore of mingled lip, nose, and throat noises, the magician now knelt down close by Ali's side. With trembling fingers he raised her hips, untied her loin-skirt and took it off, so that she lay quite naked before him. Then, seizing the bowl, he made a couple of rapid passes with it, beginning at one wooden god and finishing at the other, before suddenly flinging the whole contents over her stomach.

I was chained to the spot; my eyes stared rigidly, seeing everything through a haze. I told myself that the whole thing was madness, trying to rouse myself and laugh it off; but I was numbed and helpless, my thoughts dying stillborn, unformed and lifeless.

Quicker than words can tell he rubbed the mess over the lower part of her body, which began to rise and fall spasmodically. With the palms of his hands he stroked up and down, keeping time with her movements, which rapidly increased in violence and irregularity. She shook all over as if with ague, her knees jerked, her legs doubled up, her feet contracted convulsively with bent, distorted toes.

Presently her breathing became more regular,

her body rising and falling in time with the magician's stroking. Her breast heaved, her eyelids quivered, her breath sighed through the struggling nostrils, forcing its way down the windpipe with a horrid gurgling noise, which chilled my blood.

Abruptly the witch-doctor ceased his movements and sat back on his haunches. Simultaneously Ali's limbs and body relaxed, collapsing in a lifeless bundle on the mat, while a long, moaning sigh issued from her foam-flecked lips.

The old man wiped his steaming forehead. Tears of relief streamed from my eyes, a heavy weight seemed to fall from my heart. But Ali still lay unconscious.

Then he bent once more over her, carefully wiped the brown mixture from her body, laid the skirt over her loins, lifted her limp head, and poured some fresh cocoa-nut milk down her throat.

Ali awoke, and looked round dazedly with great, unseeing eyes. Only after the old man had plied her with questions, asking her whether she was tired, or whether she was in pain, did consciousness completely return. When her gaze at last fell on me, she half-stretched out a limp, feeble hand, and a smile of happiness overspread her face.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IN the weeks following her visit to the witch-doctor, Ali went about with an expression of confidence and joyful anticipation. I, on the other hand, was extremely afraid of the results in the event of the spell failing.

Her personality was so intense—she put every drop of blood into the passion of the moment, be it hope, love, or hate—that I was afraid she might, so to speak, bleed to death, if her heart's desire should fail her.

I tried several times to prepare her for a disappointment, and often, as we lay side by side in the shadow of our house, gazing idly up at the swaying tree-tops and listening to the gentle breathing of the breakers on the reef, I reminded her how happy we had always been, we two quite alone.

I believed that the fear of being sent back to her father in the event of not bearing me a child was the cause of her anxiety. I therefore always impressed upon her in every possible manner that

I could not get along without her. How could I possibly manage the house and farm and *taro* field, if she were to die or leave me?

When I spoke thus, she would look up with shining eyes and parted lips. But whenever I hinted that a child would only be an encumbrance, in that she must look after it instead of me, her lips would tighten obstinately, and her expression become puzzled and gloomy.

"How could I forget you for your child?" she said once. "Is it not you I make again?"

She looked thoughtful for a moment, then her face lighted up. Taking my hand in hers she said: "Do you forget your hand for your head?" She placed her hands on my neck, and continued with a broad smile: "Do you forget your head for your heart?"

Then she suddenly became serious again, and with the utmost nonchalance said: "How could I keep you always if I could not take you to me whenever I wished and make you again?"

I folded her in my arms and prayed to all the good spirits that she might not be disappointed.

. . . . . .

What it was that made the difference I do not know, but, a month after her last visit to the

Women's House, Ali discovered that she was with child.

She, who had already taken joy by the forelock, took it as a matter of course; but I was amazed and delighted.

. . . . . .

Ali became quiet and thoughtful. She took great care of herself, and often sat with her hands in her lap looking straight before her, silent and distrait, as if listening for something.

She would not allow me to take a share of her work, but carried out all her daily duties with her customary care and thoroughness. In the evening, however, when we lay with our hands behind our heads in the shadow of our house, her eyes never for a moment left my face.

Every time I turned I found them staring into mine, shining with such unalloyed happiness and peace that my heart thrilled with tenderness. I have never seen that look in any other woman's eyes. My mother's eyes I remember but dimly.

. . . . . .

One morning Ali captured one of our young cocks, and, regardless of its pecking and shrieking, held it fast between her knees and pulled out two tail-feathers, one green and one red. This done, she let the bird go again, and walked

proudly up to me, the feathers stuck in her hair.

"Why did you do that?" I asked, astonished.

"It will be a son now!" she said. "I have dreamt it!"

Ali never did anything without first considering whether it could harm "him." She carefully destroyed every trace of *mumut*, burning all half-gnawed fish or chicken bones and never by any chance leaving a mouthful of food on her plate. Also she seldom went beyond our stockade, for fear her footmarks might be found by some jealous person or spirit, and through them the child in her body bewitched.

As a little girl in the King's House she had heard all sorts of women's gossip: for example, that when a pregnant woman ate lots of yam roots her child would be thin and lanky; that *taro* would make the child short and fat. Ali therefore scrupulously avoided both yams and *taro*.

On the other hand, a fish diet made the child clever, while fowl-flesh gave it a strong will. Ali therefore lived mostly on fish and fowls; adding also bananas, which ensured the child a kind and calm disposition, and cocoa-nuts, which ensured good and plentiful suck.

She dared not eat pork, because she had heard of a woman doing so who had a child with

pig's bristles on its body instead of hair.

. . . . . .

The days followed one another in a long and happy sequence. We had a good monsoon, with plenty of calm weather—a little rain occasionally, but practically no storms. We had not had a real hurricane all the time I had been on the island.

One night I was awakened by Ali shaking my arm.

"What is it?" I asked, still half asleep.

"He moved!" she said in a voice trembling with emotion. "He moved, just beneath my heart."

She took hold of my hand and pressed it to her body underneath her left breast, but I could feel nothing except the movement of her diaphragm as she breathed.

"There, he moved again!" she whispered, lying down quietly on her back. "Didn't you feel it?"

"Yes!" I said to please her; but just as I was falling asleep again I heard gentle sobbing in her throat.

"Why are you crying?" I asked.

"I am crying because he moved!" she answered, her first tears of motherhood falling afresh.

They were tears of joy.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

AS her time approached, Ali went about wrapped in her own thoughts, smiling to me when I spoke, but not answering.

One night she rose up, took one of our sleeping-mats, and made a separate bed for herself. I objected to this, and demanded that she should return, but she merely looked at me with a timid, beseeching glance.

When I put my arm round her, she gently disengaged herself and rolled over on her mat. "No! No!" she implored.

I could hear by the tone of her voice the effort it cost her to repulse me, but I was so accustomed to have her by my side that I became irritated at what I considered a mere whim.

One evening I spoke angrily to her on the subject. She made no reply, but soon afterwards I heard her sobbing, and even after she had fallen asleep her body shook with grief.

On the following evening, as we stood up at sunset to go into the house and sleep, she stood

suddenly quite still and faced me with a mournful, searching glance. Then, placing her arms on my shoulders, she said, with a deep sigh: "Why don't you go to Ikala?"

"Never!" I exclaimed, looking reproachfully at her.

"All the other men do," she said, smiling sadly.

. . . . . .

That night I lay for a long time sleepless, thinking over her self-sacrificing love in mentioning the joyless widow's name. I knew well enough that it was the accepted custom on the island for men to go to other women when their wives were ill. But with me and Ali it seemed different somehow.

. . . . . .

Some days later, upon returning from fishing, I met Ikala wandering round our stockade as if looking for some one. Upon hearing me she turned swiftly. By the eager, intense look she threw at me as she moistened her lips with her thin red tongue I realized that I was the object of her search.

I began now to understand the methods of the joyless widows. They keep themselves well informed of all that occurs in the huts, and whenever they are likely to be useful they appear on their own initiative. Thus one is spared the

necessity of overcoming one's scruples and seeking them out.

Without saying a word, she walked slowly past me, swaying on her heavy hips, her eyes fixed on mine. Such was the remarkable power of her glance that I followed her almost mechanically.

She roused my curiosity, so that I went with her to her hut, which was situated by itself, surrounded by a thick shrubbery of yam bushes. The huge, fertile green leaves cast a welcome shade over the clean, well-kept little yard. She motioned me to a dazzlingly clean mat and, still without speaking, took a *kawa* root from a shelf, lay down on her back across my lap, and, opening her mouth, displayed two rows of gleaming brown teeth and a clean red palate.

I twisted the *kawa* root from her hand and pushed her away. Be her mouth ever so clean, she should never chew *kawa* for me.

She looked at me with a teasing smile, her mouth curling with scarce-concealed contempt, as it had done on the occasion of our first meeting.

Humming in her deep voice, she rose to her feet and took down a cocoa-nut shell in which were a number of sea-slugs, cooked and dried in the same manner as I had once eaten them at

a dinner on Yap Island. She took one herself and then offered me the bowl.

I ate one; it was delicious. I ate another—and yet another.

All the time her large, blank eyes never left me. Her humming developed gradually into a purring noise deep down in her throat, extraordinarily caressing and fascinating.

Presently she once more lay back on my lap, and this time, influenced more by curiosity than by lust, I let her remain.

After leaving Ikala I felt utterly ashamed of myself on Ali's account, and walked restlessly to and fro in the moonlight for a long time before I could force myself to go home.

Upon reaching our fence I heard voices, Ali's and a stranger's. I held my breath and listened.

It was a woman's voice. The truth flashed upon me: Ali was ill and about to give birth to her child.

I hurried forward. There on her knees in the doorway, her hands outstretched clutching the low framework, crouched my wife. Behind her sat a woman whose face I could not see owing to the shadow cast by Ali's body.

As I appeared, a convulsion seized her, but not a shriek passed her lips. Then looking up she

saw me standing in the moonlight; she said nothing, but her glance was like that of a mortally wounded deer. Her spirit was with the young strong life within her, even now struggling towards the light.

The strange woman bent towards me, waving me away indignantly with both arms. Instead of retreating I approached nearer; I then recognized her as Ali's mother, the woman who once upon a time removed Ali by the scruff of the neck at the King's House, and who, later on, escorted her to the Common House. My mother-in-law!

How it had come about that she now sat here with Ali, who had not been outside the house for several days, and had had no messenger to send other than myself, I understood just as little as the fact of Ikala's cunningly timed arrival at the stockade a few hours previously. They are both proofs of the mysterious and infallible instinct characterizing the natives.

Upon my ignoring her rebuke and, instead, approaching still closer to Ali, the old woman flung herself forward between us, exclaiming angrily: "Don't you know that no man may be present at the birth of a child?"

I hesitated as to what course to pursue; but

when Ali turned her head and looked at me in a manner clearly indicating dismissal, I turned on my heel and went outside the stockade.

Frantic with anxiety I stood prepared to rush in at the first shriek. But suddenly I realized my complete helplessness, and knew that I would only be in the way, and that Ali could be in no better hands than in those which had held her at her own birth.

I held my breath, listening to every sound, whilst I shamefacedly fought back the recollection of the hours spent with Ikala. After a time I could bear the listening no longer. I began walking restlessly to and fro between the stockade and the *taro* field, never, however, going beyond earshot of the house.

I would have given all I possessed to hear Ali call for me; but there came no sound.

For several hours I thus slunk about, until my nerves quivered like wires and my knees trembled beneath me. The white moonshine through the lianas threw a huge network of shadows across the white path.

At last, like a clap of thunder after hours of stifling heat, a shriek broke the silence.

One single, rending shriek, more like the cry

of an animal than of a human being in pain. Some bats, scared by the noise, fluttered in the tree-tops; a dog began to howl among the huts.

Again came a shriek, this time fierce and savage, making me hold my breath in suspense, and then another which rose louder and louder, and then stopped abruptly as if cut in two, dying away in a long-drawn-out, agonized wail. . . .

Then the bleating of a strong little voice rose into the air.

The tension relaxed: so suddenly and so violently that I burst into tears. An indescribable feeling of success and happiness swept over me.

I rushed to the stockade and shouted "Ali!" but the door was fastened, and there came no answer. I stood a long time there, listening. Occasionally I heard the blessed bleating, but now it was much subdued, from which I realized that they had carried Ali in on her mat, and had shut the door to the house.

Then I resumed my roaming to and fro from the fence to the road. But as soon as dawn began to tinge the sea, and the sky became one huge pale opal, I ran down to the strand and stood, proud and happy, watching for the first rays of the sun.

I don't remember now what thoughts and resolutions—for I probably made resolutions—filled my heart. But I stretched out my arms to the sun and was happy.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SEVERAL times during the early hours of the morning I came to the gate, waiting in vain for the old woman to open; call out I dared not, for fear of waking Ali. Finally, hearing the rattling of the house door and the beating of a mat on the step, I shouted loudly and impatiently, with the result that I was at last allowed to enter my own yard.

My mother-in-law showed all her teeth, stroked my arm, and exclaimed: "A son for your old age and your race!"

I looked round vainly for something to give her. "You shall have a big *tabu!*" I said hastily, hurrying past her towards the door.

On entering I found the room divided into two compartments by means of a screen formed of all the mats in the house, which the old woman had carefully sewn together.

I then remembered the islanders' confounded custom that a man may not see his wife before she is up and about and has bathed herself.

Consigning their custom to the lower regions, I made towards the screen, intending to pull it aside, but the old woman seized my shoulder in a clawlike grasp, gesticulating violently as she expostulated with me.

"Do you wish to kill her?" she hissed angrily. I answered her with honeyed words, lauding to the skies, herself, her daughter, and her family for the generations past and to come, until at last I persuaded her to let me see my son.

She slipped under the screen. A rustling and a low, bleating noise followed, and a moment later she reappeared carrying a bundle enveloped in Ali's new loin-skirt. She removed the wrapping, exposing to view a plump little shivering body, quite light brown in colour, and covered all over with fine, downy hair.

"Splendid shape!" ejaculated my mother-in-law, pointing proudly to the infant's head, which she had pressed into shape with her hands.

As I lifted the tiny form carefully in my arms, two large eyes suddenly shone into mine. They were Ali's eyes, except, perhaps, a shade lighter in colour. They stared straight at me, but, of course, could see nothing; I thought they looked rather astonished, perhaps a little angry.

Suddenly he began mouthing at me like a puppy

seeking its mother's udder, his fat little hands fumbling and striking at the air. Failing to find the soft round thing he sought, his eyes closed, and a loud wailing burst from his lips, which my mother-in-law instantly sought to stifle by wrapping his head in the cloth, after which she again disappeared under the mat.

Then I heard Ali move and sigh; I heard her yawn and wake; I heard her voice call feebly. Then I felt the child being put into her arms; I heard the excited sucking and purring as it clung to its source of life. My mother-in-law whispered something; immediately afterwards Ali's voice spoke to me through the screen, tinged with a pathetic tenderness I had never heard before: "Is he big and good?" she asked.

"He is the biggest, the best . . ."

I realized with a pang that I lacked words to tell her in her own speech how utterly and completely wonderful I found the son she had given me.

"Can you see it is you?" she asked afresh, laughing happily.

"Yes, my honey-bird, my . . ."

Again words failed me. I lost control of myself. I tried to push my way under the screen. But my mother-in-law was there immedi-

ately, and I heard Ali cry out in a warning, horrified voice: "You must not! You must not!" Then I resigned myself to the inevitable.

Before midday the event was known all over the village. In the afternoon Toko and Tongu came to see me, being received by my mother-in-law at the stockade gate, according to native custom, with great ceremony.

Having entered the house they laid their gifts, consisting of various kinds of food, before me, wishing the little one a long life and a big *tabu*.

Toko was extremely nervous, but Tongu, with his customary *savoir faire*, asked anxiously about Ali's health, expressing his desire for her speedy recovery, and on the whole fulfilled the rôle of budding godfather.

I chewed a *betel* quid for both of them, and one for my mother-in-law, who was tremendously inflated with her importance and proud of her daughter. After we had chewed and spat for the period demanded by etiquette, Toko and Tongu solemnly took their departure.

Soon afterwards the wise Wahuja paid a visit, escorted by two of the King's servants bearing gifts to me from the King and from himself—a basket full of the finest cocoa-nuts on the island, sent specially for Ali, a finely ground mussel

ax for me (a little work of art that I was really delighted with, and which I have still in my possession); a finest quality mat, plaited by the King's women; and a little fat sucking-pig from His Majesty's sty.

The pig was immediately let loose by my mother-in-law among the fowls, where it caused such a panic of cackling and crowing that I ran out to catch it and tie it by the leg to a tree.

I was in such good humour with all the world that I could not think of letting Wahuja depart in vain. Having chewed our *betel* quids, I poured him out a glass, almost the last now, of the priceless rum. Wahuja, sighing mournfully on observing how little there was left in the bottle, licked as usual the glass both inside and out, and proceeded to hold forth on the corruptibility of all things.

Following Wahuja to the door, I caught sight of Winawa standing, hesitating and doubtful, some little distance off. I waved her away angrily, not wishing Ali to hear her voice, and be afraid of her evil intentions.

Later in the day more visits followed: "the Great Hunter," Kadu and Fagoda, and several of the girls, including the inquisitive Awa, the stately Muwa, the little plump Sakalawa, and the

affectionate Milawa with the pretty shoulders. The broad-nosed Nanuki with the languishing glance sent her excuses; she was herself in bed, expecting a child.

When I had finally seen the back of the last guest and stood at the stockade gate gazing at the sunset, Ikala came past, swaying on her heavy hips. When she caught sight of me she stopped and gazed at me with her blank eyes and contemptuous smile.

Once more I was filled with shame at what I had done; and, turning my back on her in disgust, I swore a bitter oath never again to satisfy my curiosity at such a fearful price.

. . . . . .

Early the next morning I heard Ali's voice. In a hushed, intense voice she kept repeating the same word.

"What are you saying?" I asked through the screen.

"Oasu!—Oasu!" she whispered over the child's head. (I could not see her, but I knew she did so.)

"Oasu" means "the sun." In such a manner did he receive his name.

. . . . . .

"Oasu!—Oasu!"

How sweet the word sounded as she jodelled it in her soft, melodious voice, as full of tenderness as her heart was full of love.

Each day as we lay in the shadow of our house, the boy crawling over her bare brown body, clinging with both hands to the breasts which gave him life, she would look down at him with her parted lips, quivering with tenderness, murmuring incessantly, as if in benediction: "Oasu!—Oasu!"

Ali took Oasu with her wherever she went, carrying him in a large silk scarf, the last one of my collection. I had hidden it carefully from Tongu's and Wahuja's eyes; and now I had given it to Ali in which to carry her first-born.

The scarf was fastened at the back of her neck, passing under her left arm, the child slung in front of her in the native fashion just below the breasts.

All the native women carried their children in the same manner, but not one of them possessed such a gorgeous carrying-cloth, a fact of which Ali was immensely proud.

The child lay on its back, only its head and feet being visible, resting there in warmth and comfort while Ali performed her duties in the house. She put him down only when she worked

in the fields, placing him in the shadow of a bush and wrapping him completely in the scarf so that the insects might not bite his tender skin.

Oasu was in splended condition. He was always cheerful, and cried only when he was hungry and not immediately supplied with milk.

. . . . . .

Oasu cut his first tooth, and Ali rejoiced. Oasu learned to walk, and Ali was proud. Oasu began to stammer his own name; it was like a bird singing.

Ali weaned him by first chewing a piece of *taro* or banana and then letting him take it from her mouth with his small, pointed lips, a game which he thoroughly enjoyed.

For two whole years, the days of which slid past like pearls on a string, we were happy—Ali and Oasu and I.

Then came the end!

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE autumn monsoon change was approaching, and to please the faithful Toko I had agreed to go fishing with him.

Just before sunrise I heard him hammering at the outer door. "There's a calm!" he shouted. "The sea is quite still by the reef and the canoe is ready! Hurry up, it is good weather for turtles!"

One of Toko's convictions was that he could feel instinctively the best time to catch turtles. When he got such an idea in his head nothing could dampen his ardour.

Ali tried to prevent my going. She always disapproved of fishing, because women were not allowed to join in. She flung her arms round me, exclaiming that she had had a bad dream in the night. But, feeling sorry for Toko, I succeeded in calming her, promising, however, to return early.

We paddled slowly westwards towards the reef, which at low water formed a long, narrow, flat

island. Toko kept insisting that it was turtle-catching weather, and was therefore not keen on fishing. Nevertheless, we put out our bamboo dredger when we were half-way across, drawing it gently after us at the end of a long *rotang* line.

The weather was wonderful, the air more dazzlingly clear and the water more transparent than I had ever seen them before. We could plainly distinguish the gorgeous coral flowers deep at the bottom of the lagoon, covered with hundreds of weird parasitic molluscs swaying to and fro with the motion of the water.

Toko sat at the bow, staring straight ahead, and after paddling for more than an hour without catching the slightest glimpse of anything resembling the head or back of a turtle, he decided to lie in under the reef and wait.

We remained there for what seemed an interminable time, peering round in all directions without daring to move. At last I lost patience, and suggested that we should abandon turtle-fishing and take to trawling. Toko, however, who is obstinacy incarnate when he has an idea in his thick head, insisted on remaining where we were until the tide turned.

We lay there dozing yet another half-hour; that is to say, I dozed, as far as it was possible

on an uncomfortable seat with my knees against my chin; Toko glared in relentless silence, his brow growing gloomier and gloomier with annoyance. It was a point of honour with him to find a turtle.

At last the tide reached its lowest ebb. Toko stepped out of the canoe, the water barely reaching to his knees, and crept cautiously towards the low coral reef.

Having reached it, he stood for a moment peering round in all directions; then, going forward to the top of the reef, he looked out on the other side over the smooth, shining sea.

Suddenly he turned round and pointed with his hand towards the eastern horizon. I looked and saw a dark, peculiarly sharp-edged cloud close to the surface of the water. It appeared to be moving towards us, and resembled some gigantic sea-bird on the wing.

I stood up in the boat to get a better view, and understood at once that a storm was approaching. I kept a sharp eye on the cloud, while Toko, realizing that there was no time to spare, redoubled his efforts to find a turtle.

The cloud rose slowly above the horizon, increasing rapidly in size: it was, without doubt, coming straight for this island. Soon the first

faint puff of wind came sweeping over the surface of the water, blurring its smooth, glassy surface.

I knew from experience how quickly such storms can approach, and shouted to Toko to abandon his turtles and come back to the boat. He stamped his feet angrily in the water, muttering some sulky reply, but when he saw me hauling in the net he turned and came slowly towards me.

By the time he had reached the boat, he too felt nervous about the cloud. He stared at the black monster and then anxiously at me; but I made no remark.

We pulled the net into the boat. When I made no attempt to examine its contents, but instead hurriedly tied the mouth fast, Toko was alarmed.

"Storm?" he asked.

I was careful not to tell him what it was I feared; he would have been terror-stricken; and we would soon need our presence of mind.

We took up the paddles and made for home with all our might.

The wind, still blowing from the east, increased steadily. The cloud, which by this time

had assumed formidable proportions, hung black and threatening over the sea, its tail swinging towards the south.

As it came nearer, I could see numerous cloud-flakes underneath it which continually broke away and whirled towards us at express speed.

I was no longer in doubt: it was the typhoon. Once Tongu and I had experienced one on Yap Island, on which occasion it killed threescore people and swept away their huts.

Although scarcely a quarter of an hour had passed since the first faint puff of wind, it now blew so strongly that the birds out by the reef were compelled to fly in enormous zigzags to make headway against it.

Toko kept looking up into my face, but I maintained an unbroken silence.

The water began to rise, almost submerging the reef, leaving only a thin line visible of the island where Toko only a few minutes before had stood.

White horses appeared far out to sea; even in the lagoon the waves became restless and foam-capped, swirling and beating with a roar upon the reef.

Although we exerted every ounce of strength,

we made but little progress, paddling dead against wind and tide.

A sudden gust of wind struck us like a blow. The cloud began to blot out the daylight; it was almost certain that the hurricane would be right over our heads in less than ten minutes.

I thought of the previous monsoon changes during my stay upon the island—Tongu's statement that there had been no real hurricane there for the last fifteen years now seemed to me almost incredible. Realizing that it was impossible for us to make headway against both wind and tide in a north-easterly direction, I determined, while it was yet possible, to make a bee-line for the coast, and get home as best we could along the shore.

Saying nothing to Toko of my fears, I altered our course; the waves dashed over the side of the boat, but we made more rapid progress.

At last Toko could contain himself no longer. "Is it the typhoon?" he whispered, his eyes bulging with terror.

"No," I said, "but it is a storm!"

Further explanation was unnecessary, for the sea was already smashing in over the reef. The wind came in great gusts towards us from the east; but for our floating-keel we would inevitably have capsized long ago.

When we were about half-way to land, the wind swung round to the north, the change coming so suddenly that we nearly upset. Fortunately Toko had not experienced a hurricane since his childhood, otherwise he would certainly have recognized the black monster with its loose, low-hanging cloud-flakes; worse still, he would have known that the abrupt change of wind was an unmistakable proof that we were already in the grip of the typhoon.

We were in for it with a vengeance; death was at our very heels. The waters rose steadily, and the storm whipped them into frenzy. Soon they would wash right over the reef and hurl themselves upon the coast. Finally they would sweep over the low-lying island, tearing up trees by their roots, overturning huts, swallowing in their relentless jaws every living thing obstructing their passage.

I thought of Ali and Oasu: my heart stood still. It was impossible for me to reach home in time.

Who was there to save her? Which of the villagers would remember her helplessness? I put all my hopes on Tongu, comforting myself with the memory of his long faithful friendship. Tongu knew that we were out fishing, and that

Ali was alone with her child and her terror. Tongu was experienced; he knew the danger and would go to her in time.

Thus did I try to shake off the dread that filled me. Suddenly Toko began to tremble, showing the whites of his eyes in panic. "The spirits are after us!" he screamed, looking helplessly at me.

There was no time to reason with him. We must reach land and find a place sufficiently elevated to escape the coming flood.

I had it. The Fathers' Stone!

The ruin was of such antiquity that it must have withstood many such hurricanes; also it was on high ground.

"Can you find the stream in the mangrove wood," I asked—"the one leading to the Fathers' Stone?"

Toko understood immediately. He sprang to his feet and looked round. Then he began paddling with all his strength in a westerly direction. With the rising storm and death behind us, we fought for our lives; we passed the jungle, which was swaying and howling like a fiend; we entered the bay, where it was a little less rough; we saw the wall of aerial roots, and heard the old treetops groaning and sighing in the storm.

Then Toko's sharp eyes found the mouth of

the stream and we dashed in, the foam swirling under our keel.

It was almost dark. The cloud hung nearly perpendicularly over our heads.

The waters swirled behind us, the mangroves rattled and creaked, the lianas writhed, the aerial roots vibrated like strings played upon by the storm; but the narrow stream was comparatively undisturbed, a fact which calmed Toko considerably. I, knowing the horror that was to come, still paddled with all my might.

The next moment the cloud was directly above us. Everything grew black; the air suddenly became still and stifling; my head throbbed painfully, and I could scarcely breathe.

Then it began. The first flash of lightning glittered through the darkness; crash after crash of thunder flung itself upon us.

The storm swept over us in great gusts, nothing but the thick wall of trees saving us from destruction.

Toko crouched down like a frightened animal, the paddle almost falling from his hands. Fearing he would break down completely, I swore at him, calling him by every disgraceful name I could think of. At last, stung to action by the epithet "woman," he sat up and began to row again.

Rain streamed down in sheets, striking the swollen waters at an acute angle.

"Rain," did I say? It was not rain, but a cloud-burst. In spite of it, neither wind nor lightning ceased, while the heat and the air-pressure became more and more unbearable. The streaming water formed a solid grey wall before our eyes, making it impossible to see two yards ahead. The boat was soon more than half full, and, to complete our misfortunes, Toko suddenly declared himself unable to find the landing-place.

I spoke to him, painting in lurid terms what was at stake. Were we to die here in the mangrove swamp, to lie and rot among the evil, departed spirits whose home it was?

My words had an immediate effect: his howls ceased as if by magic. After helping me to bail out the water he resumed his place at the bow. Once more the canoe crept slowly forward.

At last he found the tree he sought. I also recognized the giant fallen trunk. Its surface was smooth and shiny with the streaming rain which poured off it in torrents to either side into the thick, black mud.

Abandoning the boat to its fate, we grasped the trunk, and with tremendous exertions succeeded in struggling up on its smooth surface.

Toko went in front; I slipped several times, and would most certainly have been swallowed up in the swamp but for his assistance.

At one place the rotten wood collapsed beneath our feet, leaving us both hanging, shaken and terrified, by our arms. Fighting for our lives, we pulled ourselves up and resumed our perilous journey. Above our heads the murderous black cloud belched forth quivering daggers of molten fire, while the thunder deafened our ears and the rain lashed our backs like blows from a giant whip.

I shall never forget that terrible babel. Always when I think of that day, its multifarious noises resound again in my ears: the howls and wails of the mangroves; the shrieking and whistling of the lianas; the quivering clatter of the aerial roots; the ceaseless plash of the pouring rain upon the mud. And rising high above it all like the cries of a lost soul, the fiendish shrieking of the storm.

At last Toko reached the end and jumped down. But so saturated was the ground that he sank in it to his knees. We had to squelch our way laboriously forward until we had scarcely strength to drag one foot before the other.

But all the time the ground slanted upwards. The bottom was firmer for every yard we covered,

until at last it was so high that the water simply streamed over it without having time to soak in.

Presently we saw the vampire bats' bread-fruit trees swaying ahead of us, and knew that we were near our destination. Once we saw a huge old tree felled by the storm: first a shriek of complaint as the branches swished through the air; then a long, despairing sigh as the trunk fell, crushing and smashing everything in its resistless course.

Toko seized my arm convulsively; he believed the frightful shriek of evil spirits sounded in his ears. I am convinced that his eyes had seen them actually fell the tree; to him the sighing of the trunk had been the death-rattle of a good spirit.

I gave him no time for thought. I kept bullying him, although to make myself heard I had to bawl at the top of my voice in his ear—threatening him with the vengeance of my spirits when he tried to throw himself down in panic before his own. By sheer force of personality I compelled him to lead the way to the Fathers' Stone.

At last we reached it: the giant blocks of basalt gleamed through the semi-darkness.

Now that the ground was higher we felt again the full force of the storm. In spite of being in

the lee of the mangrove trees, we were forced to fling ourselves down and crawl the last few yards on all fours over the slippery wet ground, until, reaching the ruin, we scrambled over and fell exhausted on the other side.

Presently the hurricane began to die down. It seemed, so to speak, to fall to pieces, degenerating into spasmodic gusts which gradually diminished in force and frequency.

Suddenly it became quite calm. The curtain of clouds divided, revealing a small patch of clear blue sky. Toko, who had been lying in shivering fear face downwards on the ground, rose to his feet, and looked at me with tears of joy in his eyes.

But I, knowing the truth, could not rejoice. I knew that the front half of the hurricane had passed us, and that the present calm was caused by the passage of the typhoon's centre, usually about four miles or more in diameter. Following this would come the rear half of the hurricane, but this time would blow from the diametrically opposite quarter. And then—then would come the horror, the horror which spreads death and destruction in its wake.

Not, however, for us, in our elevated nook where no flood could reach; but for all the huts

situated in the lowlands and for the people who remained there at the time of the flood.

The immense force of the hurricane drives the waters of the sea resistlessly together from every point of the compass, causing them to rise sometimes as much as forty feet above high-water level. The sea sweeps in over the low-lying island and lifts all things in its arms, smashing them against rocks and trees; sucking them back out into the fathomless deep where death dwells.

"Ali! Ali!"

Rigid with horror I stared in the direction where I felt my house to be. My thoughts whirled round in a frenzied chain seeking relief—but no relief came.

In my desperate need I clung to Tongu, seeking by force of will to influence him from afar, at the same time trying to recall all that I knew about telepathy and thought-projection.

I put my soul close to Ali's soul and sought to comfort her. I seemed to hear her shrieks. I saw her with Oasu in her arms running to and fro along the strand, calling to me across the frenzied waters.

"Help her, Tongu! Take her up to the King's cocoa-nut grove, above the reach of the flood! Help her and the child, Tongu! Remember that

I saved your life once on Yap Island! Take the whole of my sea-chest! Tongu, help her, help her! I will work for you for years, if you will only save her for me!"

How long we crouched there, terrified and silent, I know not. It seemed like a whole night, but it can scarcely have been more than an hour and a half: for the centre of the typhoon moves quickly, and is seldom more than twelve miles across.

Presently the silence was broken by a distant booming noise which rapidly grew louder and louder. I clambered on to the wall to look, but could see nothing unusual; it sounded as if the breakers on the reef had come quite close to us. A sudden gust of wind nearly upset me. It came from the south, and I knew that the calm period was over, and that the rear half of the hurricane was upon us.

I jumped down again, and Toko and I hurried round to the opposite side of the ruin to secure shelter. Before we got there, the sky was again black and threatening; clouds drove at express speed over our heads. The gusts of wind swelled into a storm; the heat increased, and the rain recommenced with its former violence.

The storm blotted out the booming noise I had

heard from the wall. But a fearful sound now rose above the roar of the tempest, chilling the blood in my veins.

The sea had risen! It was the flood!

Like an army of elephants it rushed through the mangrove woods, seething and roaring in frenzy; past the millions of aerial roots, breaking them like twigs; overturning old worm-eaten trunks; lifting fallen trees from their beds of mud and driving them onward, smashing and crushing their still living brothers, annihilating the creepers and tearing the lianas in twain.

All this I saw nothing of; I only heard it, imagining it from the sounds, feeling it as though possessed of a sixth sense.

That was the most frightful part of it: we heard all and saw nothing. The wall of darkness formed an inpenetrable veil into which we strained our eyes in vain.

Close to our ears, under our very feet, Death swept forward over our beloved island. We sat on our lonely hilltop and saw nothing; but we heard the rending and crashing of the trees, and we felt the stones against which we leaned rock as if shaken by an earthquake.

At last my senses began to leave me: I heard no more. I remember only that I kept saying

over and over to myself the same hopeless, heart-breaking words: "Now the flood is upon the huts and is taking Ali and Oasu!"

I remember nothing more: I remember nothing of Toko: I became unconscious.

. . . . . .

When I came to myself, my teeth were chattering and my body shivering with cold, wet, and terror. Toko lay face downwards on the ground, sound asleep, snoring.

The storm had died away; the rain had ceased, the black death-cloud had disappeared. Except for a few scattered clouds fringing the setting sun the sky was quite clear.

We crept down to the mangroves, but it was impossible to go farther; the ground was one immense swamp. By the time we reached the ruin again the sun had sunk and it was quite dark: we must pass the night at the Fathers' Stone.

At the first sign of dawn we set out on our homeward journey, following a long detour which Toko alone knew, and which led past the strange town, Wattiwua, which we had once visited.

A more terrible night I have never passed; a more terrible journey I have never made. We were dropping with exhaustion. Often I had to rest because my knees would not support me.

But worst of all was the dull certainty in my heart, the despairing conviction that Ali and the child were no more.

I cannot explain how it was that hope had deserted me, for hope usually lingers until killed by certainty. But I *knew* that Ali was dead.

Towards midday we reached the King's cocoanut grove from the north side, and found all the people whose huts had been destroyed assembled there. Tongu came slowly towards me, crying, and fell down at my feet. He knew that I had trusted in him.

No words were necessary. I sat down and wept with the others. When Toko saw my tears he flung himself flat on the ground and howled like a sick hound.

Tongu told me afterwards how, when the storm began, he went to Ali, who was running with the child in her arms to and fro along the strand, calling my name. But she would not listen to him.

Only when she could no longer stand against the storm, and the child was shrieking with terror, did she allow him to lead her to the house, where she lay down at once on our mat, still clasping the child.

Tongu tried to persuade her to accompany him

to the cocoa-nut grove, but she replied that she would wait till I came: I should not find the house empty upon my return.

In vain did he tell her of the flood which would surely come: she would not listen.

Later on, having abandoned his own hut, which was on a lower level than ours, he came again to Ali and found her lying on the mat wailing. After a final vain attempt to persuade her to leave, he seized her round the waist to take her away by force. But at that she sprang up and attacked him, striking and biting like one possessed, as if afraid of his taking her child from her.

Her last words were that "the good one" should not find the house deserted and empty when he returned.

Tongu accompanied me to the place where the house had stood. Only the wooden foundations and the heavy sea-chest were left.

There, jammed between the chest and a beam, so firmly that not even the flood could move her, lay Ali, her child clasped tightly to her cold breast. His little head was pressed against her neck so that her chin rested upon his hair: we found it impossible to separate them.

Their faces were calm and peaceful. Their eyes were closed. They seemed to be asleep.

THE END